PRACTICAL
DISCOURSES
On All the
PARTS and OFFICES
OF THE
LITURGY
OF THE
Church of *England.*

Wherein are laid open the HARMONY, EXCELLENCY, and USEFULNESS of its Compoſure.

Uſeful for all FAMILIES.

VOLUME the FOURTH, in Three Parts.

By MATTHEW HOLE, B.D.
Prebendary of the Church of *Wells*, and Vicar of *Stokegurſy* in *Somerſetſhire.*

1 Cor. XIV. 12. latter part.
Seek that ye may excel to the Edifying of the Church.

LONDON:
Printed by *J. D.* for T. VARNAM and J. OSBORN in *Lombard-ſtreet*, W. TAYLOR at the Ship in *Pater-noſter-Row*, H. CLEMENTS at the Half-Moon in St. *Paul's Church-yard*, and J. BROWNE without *Temple-Bar.* M. DCC. XVI.

PRACTICAL

DISCOURSES

On All the

PARTS and OFFICES

OF THE

LITURGY

OF THE

Church of England.

Wherein are laid open the HARMONY, Difficulties, and Usefulness of its Compofure.

By MARTREW HOLE, B.D.

Prebendary of the Church of [illegible], and Vicar of Stoke-park in Bedfordshire.

1 Cor. XIV. 19. [illegible]

Printed by S. D. for T. [illegible] and J. Brown [illegible] MDCLXXX.

PRACTICAL
DISCOURSES
Upon All the
COLLECTS, EPISTLES, and GOSPELS, to be us'd thro-out the Year.

3 Le

In THREE PARTS.

The First reaching from ADVENT-SUNDAYS, which relate to Christ's first Coming upon Earth, to ASCENSION-DAY, when he went back again to Heaven.

The Second beginning with ASCENSION-DAY, and ending with the Last Sunday after TRINITY.

The Third containing the Epistles and Gospels for the SAINTS-DAYS thro-out the Year.

By MATTHEW HOLE, B. D.
Prebendary of the Church of *Wells*, and Vicar of *Stokegursy* in *Somersetshire*.

LONDON:
Printed by *J. D.* for T. VARNAM and J. OSBORN in *Lombard-street*, W. TAYLOR at the Ship in *Pater-noster-Row*, H. CLEMENTS at the Half-Moon in *St. Paul's Church-yard*, and J. BROWNE without *Temple-Bar*. M.DCC.XVI.

PRACTICAL

DISCOURSES

Upon All the

COLLECTS, EPISTLES, and
GOSPELS, to be us'd thro-
out the

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

The First reaching from Advent-Sunday,
which relate to Christ's first Coming upon
Earth, to Ascension-Day, when he
went back again to Heaven.

The Second beginning with Ascension-Day,
and ending with the Last Sunday after Trinity.

The Third containing the Epistles and Gospels for
the Saints-Days thro-out the Year.

By Matthew Holt, B.D.
Prebendary of the Church of Wells, and Vicar
of Nackyworth in Somersetshire.

London:
Printed by J. D. for T. Varnam and J. Osborn in Lam-
bard-street, W. Taylor, at the Ship in Pater-noster-Row,
H. Clements at the Half-Moon in St. Mary's Church-yard,
and J. Brown near Fleet-Ditch. MDCCXVI.

TO THE

Right Reverend Father in God,

GEORGE

Lord Biſhop of *Briſtol.*

My Lord,

THE Doctrine of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, the Subject of the enſuing Diſcourſes, being too much op-

pos'd by the Deists, and perverted by the Dissenters of our Days; it was requisite to shelter them under the Wing of a Patron, who is a Judg of sound Doctrine, and able thereby to convince or confute Gainsayers.

For this reason I have made bold to venture them Abroad, under the Auspicious Influence of YOUR LORDSHIP'S Protection, as a good Guardian and Defender of the Divine Truths deliver'd in them.

Indeed, the Christian Faith once deliver'd to the Saints, is that sacred Depositum, committed first to the Care of the Fathers, and by them to the Sons of the Church: both which are faithfully

ly to keep, and earneſtly to contend for it, againſt all the Aſſaults of Atheiſm and Infidelity.

Which Contention is not to be manag'd by Arms, or carnal Weapons, but by Arguments, and ſpiritual Armour: *Having our Loins girt about with Truth, and having on the Breaſt-Plate of Righteouſneſs, and our Feet ſhod with the Preparation of the Goſpel of Peace: But above all, taking the Shield of Faith, the Sword of the Spirit, and the Helmet of Salvation*; which are the beſt Weapons, and moſt mighty, thro God, to the pulling down the Strong-holds of Satan, and the building us up in our moſt Holy Faith.

Mr

MY LORD! what is deliver'd in the following Diſcourſes, is humbly ſubmitted to YOUR LORDSHIP's better Judgment; promiſing my ſelf a favourable Acceptance of my weak Endeavours herein, a candid Conſtruction of all Expreſſions in it, and a charitable Covering of all the Defects and Imperfections of the Undertaking: By which you will not only encourage, but highly oblige,

MY LORD,

YOUR LORDSHIP's

Humbly Devoted Servant,

Matthew Hole.

THE PREFACE.

THE *Subject of this large and excellent Part of our Liturgy, is, the* Collects, Epiſtles, *and* Goſpels *for the whole Year; the Knowledg whereof being ſo highly uſeful and neceſſary for the informing the Minds, exciting the Affections, and directing the Lives of all good Chriſtians, very well deſerves our Pains in explaining, and the Reader's Patience in peruſing of them.*

But before I enter upon it, 'twill be requiſite, by way of Introduction, to premiſe a few things, touching the Name, Nature, and Ends of each of them; together with the Antiquity of their Uſe, and the Fitneſs of them for the Times and Seaſons for which they are appointed.

To begin then with the Collects; theſe are ſome ſhort, pious, and pithy Prayers, collected out of the Holy Scriptures, uſher'd in with ſuch Attributes of God, as are proper and ſutable to the Petitions contain'd in them, and offer'd up in the Name and Mediation of Jeſus Chriſt.

Of the Reason of the Name, divers Accounts are given: As,

First, *Some have thought them stil'd* Collects, *because they are us'd* super collectionem Populi, *upon the meeting or gathering together of the People in the solemn Assemblies; but that Reason being common to all the publick Prayers of the Church, would give the same Denomination to all the other Prayers utter'd in the Congregation, which we know to be otherwise. And therefore,*

Secondly, *Others suppose them to be call'd Collects, because they were collected out of the Epistles and Gospels for each Day, to which they belong. But tho this may seem true in some of the Collects in Advent Sundays, and other Parts, yet it cannot be affirm'd of all or most of them; and therefore this may not be taken for the true Reason of the Name.*

Others again, Thirdly, *with greater probability, think them stil'd Collects, to distinguish them from those alternate Petitions, which are put up separately by the Minister and People; the Minister saying one Petition, and the People the other, by way of Antiphones and Responses, as may be seen in the Versicles after the Lord's Prayer in the Morning and Evening Service, the Litany, and other Offices: whereas in the Collects, the Minister collects and gathers up the joint Petitions of Priest and People, and presents them alone in one continu'd Prayer unto God. That this is the true Reason of the Name, may be easily gather'd from hence, that where the People bear any Part in the Prayer by way of Response, or make any Answer more than* Amen, *that is never call'd a Collect, but alternate Prayer: But where the Minister prays alone, and sums up or offers the joint Requests of*

the

the Congregation, without any Return or Reply of the People, that is properly call'd and known by the name of Collect.

The Epistles are certain Portions of Scripture, selected out of the Writings of the Apostles, containing many excellent Rules and Precepts for Instruction and Comfort in all Conditions. They are call'd Epistles, because they were sent by way of Letter by the Apostles to the several Churches or Places to which they are inscrib'd; for which reason they still retain the same Name.

The Gospels are taken out of the Writings of the four Evangelists, who relate the Life and Actions of our Blessed Saviour; as the Doctrine that he taught, and the Miracles by which he confirm'd it: both which being of great use for the strengthening our Faith and Hope in him, are piously order'd to be read every Lord's Day in the Ears of the People. And in honour to our Saviour, whose Words and Works they are, the Church hath commanded them to be read and heard standing; *which is a Posture of Reverence and Resolution to adhere and* stand *to them.*

This for the Name and Nature of these things, the End whereof is to raise our Affections, and to relieve the Wants both of Priest and People.

As for the Antiquity of the Use of them, that plainly appears from the antient Liturgies of the Church, and the Testimony of the antient Fathers, who have handed them down thro all Ages to our time. St. Austin *tells us, that in the* Latin *Church* the Apostolical Lesson was first read, then a Psalm or Hymn sung, and after that the Gospel, *Homil.* 10. *de Verbo Apostolico.* St. Chrysostom *informs us, that in the* Greek *Church,* the Mini-

ſter ſtood up, and with a loud Voice call'd upon the People, ſaying, Let us attend; and then the Leſſons, with the Epiſtles and Goſpels, immediately follow'd, *as may be ſeen in the Liturgy of St.* Chryſoſtom.

As for the Fitneſs of them to the Days and Times to which they are annex'd, in that, any wiſe Man that will conſider and compare them together, may eaſily ſee and ſatisfy himſelf. The great Feſtivals appointed to commemorate the Birth, Circumciſion, Reſurrection, and Aſcenſion of our Saviour, and the like, are all fitted with Portions of Scripture ſutable to thoſe Solemnities. And all other Sundays in the Year are provided with ſuch Collects, Epiſtles, and Goſpels, as ſerve either to inſtruct us in ſome Leſſon, or to remember ſome Bleſſing, or direct to ſome Duty neceſſary or uſeful for us: as, to Mortification, Repentance, and Self-denial in Lent; *to Faith, Hope, and Newneſs of Life, in the Sundays after* Eaſter; *to the Gifts, Graces, and Fruits of the Spirit, after* Pentecoſt: *by which we may the more eaſily attain to the knowledg of Holy Myſteries, and be better aſſiſted in the Practice of thoſe Vertues, that are taught by them. For this reaſon it was that the Homilies or Sermons of the Fathers were generally upon the Readings of thoſe Days; and when theſe are laid aſide, and practical Diſcourſes upon them turn'd out of the Church, 'twill not be in the power of weekly Sermons, on other Heads, to preſerve ſound Doctrine, or any true Religion among us.*

Thus hath the Church taken the beſt care it can, that all things be done to the uſe of edifying, and in that Decency and Order, that may tend moſt to the building of us up in our moſt holy Faith, and making us wiſe unto Salvation.

THE

THE CONTENTS.

DISCOURSE I.

On the Epiſtle for the firſt Sunday in *Advent*.

ROM. 13. 8, to the end. *Owe no Man any thing, but to love one another*, &c. pag. 1

DISC. II.

On the Goſpel for the firſt Sunday in *Advent*.

St. Mat. 21. 1——14. *When they drew nigh unto* Jeruſalem, *and were come to* Bethpage, *unto the Mount of Olives*, &c. 9

DISC. III.

On the Epiſtle for the ſecond Sunday in *Advent*.

Rom. 15. 4——14. *Whatſoever Things were written afore-time, were written for our Learning, that we, thro Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures, might have Hope*, &c. 18

DISC. IV.

On the Goſpel for the ſecond Sunday in *Advent*.

St. Luke 21. 25——34. *And there ſhall be Signs in the Sun, and in the Moon, and in the Stars; and upon the Earth, Diſtreſs of Nations, with Perplexity, the Sea and the Waves roaring*, &c. 26

DISC. V.

On the Epiſtle for the third Sunday in *Advent*.

1 Cor. 4. 1——6. *Let a Man ſo account of us, as of the Miniſters of Chriſt, and Stewards of the Myſteries of God*, &c. 34

DISC. VI.

On the Goſpel for the third Sunday in *Advent*.

Mat. 11. 2——11. *Now when* John *had heard in Priſon the Works of Chriſt, he ſent two of his Diſciples, and ſaid unto him, Art thou he that ſhould come, or do we look for another?* &c. 43

DISC.

DISC. VII.

On the Epistle for the fourth Sunday in *Advent*.

Phil. 4. 4——8. *Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, Rejoice*, &c. 52

DISC. VIII.

On the Gospel for the fourth Sunday in *Advent*.

St. John 1. 19——28. *This is the Record of John, when the Jews sent Priests and Levites from* Jerusalem, &c. 60

DISC. IX.

On the Epistle for *Christmas-Day*.

Heb. 1. 1——12. *God, who at sundry Times, and in divers Manners, spake in time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets*, &c. 68

DISC. X.

On the Gospel for *Christmas-Day*.

St. John 1. 1——14. *In the Beginning was the Word*, &c. 77

DISC. XI.

On the Epistle for St. *Stephen's* Day.

Acts 7. 55, to the end. Stephen *being full of the Holy Ghost, look'd up stedfastly into Heaven*, &c. 85

DISC. XII.

On the Gospel for St. *Stephen's* Day.

St. Mat. 23. 34, to the end. *Behold, I send unto you Prophets, and Wisemen, and Scribes*, &c. 92

DISC. XIII.

On the Epistle for St. *John's* Day.

1 John 1. 1, to the end. *That which was from the Beginning, which we have heard*, &c. 99

DISC. XIV.

On the Gospel for St. *John's* Day.

St. John 21. 19, to the end. *Jesus said unto Peter, follow me*, &c. 106

DISC. XV.

On the Epistle for the *Innocents* Day.

Rev. 14. 1——5. *I look'd, and lo! a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with him an hundred and forty four thousand*, &c. 113

DISC. XVI.

On the Gospel for the *Innocents* Day.

St. Mat. 2. 13——19. *The Angel of the Lord appear'd to Joseph in a Dream*, &c. 118

DISC. XVII.

On the Epistle for the Sunday after *Christmas-Day*.

Gal. 4. 1——7. *Now I say, that the Heir, as long as he is a Child, differeth nothing from a Servant*, &c. 125

DISC.

DISC. XVIII.

On the Gospel for the Sunday after *Christmas-Day.*

St. Mat. 1. 18, to the end. *Now the Birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: Whenas his Mother* Mary *was espoused to* Joseph, *&c.* 133

DISC. XIX.

On the Epistle for the Circumcision of *Christ.*

Rom. 4. 8——14. *Blessed is the Man to whom the Lord will not impute Sin,* &c. 142

DISC. XX.

On the Gospel for the Circumcision of *Christ.*

St. Luke 2. 15——21. *And it came to pass, as the Angels were gone away from them into Heaven,* &c. 150

DISC. XXI.

On the Epistle for the *Epiphany.*

Eph. 3. 1——13. *For this cause, I* Paul, *the Prisoner of Jesus Christ for you* Gentiles, *&c.* 158

DISC. XXII.

On the Gospel for the *Epiphany.*

St. Mat. 2. 1——13. *When Jesus was born in* Bethlehem *of* Judea, *in the Days of* Herod *the King,* &c. 166

DISC. XXIII.

On the Epistle for the first Sunday after the *Epiphany.*

Rom. 12. 1——6. *I beseech you therefore, Brethren, by the Mercies of God, that ye present your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,* &c. 174

DISC. XXIV.

On the Gospel for the first Sunday after the *Epiphany.*

St. Luke 2. 41. to the end. *Now his Parents went to* Jerusalem *every Year at the Feast of the Passover,* &c. 183

DISC. XXV.

On the Epistle for the second Sunday after the *Epiphany.*

Rom. 12. 6——16. *Having then Gifts, differing according to the Grace given unto us,* &c. 191

DISC. XXVI.

On the Gospel for the second Sunday after the *Epiphany.*

St. John 2. 1——12. *And the third Day there was a Marriage in* Cana *of* Galilee, *and the Mother of Jesus was there,* &c. 199

DISC. XXVII.

On the Epistle for the third Sunday after the *Epiphany.*

Rom. 12. 16, to the end. *Be not wise in your own Conceits. Recompense to no Man Evil for Evil,* &c. 207

DISC. XXVIII.

On the Goſpel for the third Sunday after the *Epiphany*.

St. Mat. 8. 1——13. *When he was come down from the Mountain, great Multitudes follow'd him*, &c. 216

DISC. XXIX.

On the Epiſtle for the fourth Sunday after the *Epiphany*.

Rom. 13. 1——8. *Let every Soul be ſubject to the Higher Powers, for there is no Power but of God*, &c. 224

DISC. XXX.

On the Goſpel for the fourth Sunday after the *Epiphany*.

St. Mat. 8. 23, to the end. *And when he was enter'd into a Ship, his Diſciples follow'd him*, &c. 233

DISC. XXXI.

On the Epiſtle for the fifth Sunday after the *Epiphany*.

Col. 3. 12——18. *Put on therefore (as the Elect of God, Holy and Beloved) Bowels of Mercy, Kindneſs, Humbleneſs of Mind, Meekneſs, Long-ſuffering*, &c. 241

DISC. XXXII.

On the Goſpel for the fifth Sunday after the *Epiphany*.

St. Mat. 13. 24——30. *The Kingdom of Heaven is liken'd unto a Man, which ſow'd good Seed in his Field*, &c. 249

DISC. XXXIII.

On the Epiſtle for the ſixth Sunday after the *Epiphany*.

1 John 3. 1——9. *Behold, what manner of Love the Father hath beſtow'd upon us, that we ſhould be call'd the Sons of God*, &c. 258

DISC. XXXIV.

On the Goſpel for the ſixth Sunday after the *Epiphany*.

St. Mat. 24. 23——31. *Then if any Man ſhould ſay unto you, Lo! here is Chriſt, or there, believe it not*, &c. 267

DISC. XXXV.

On the Epiſtle for *Septuageſima* Sunday.

1 Cor. 9. 24, to the end. *Know ye not, that they which run in a Race, run all, but one receiveth the Prize*, &c. 275

DISC. XXXVI.

On the Goſpel for *Septuageſima* Sunday.

St. Mat. 20. 1——17. *The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Man that is an Houſholder, which went out early in the Morning to hire Labourers into his Vineyard*, &c. 284

DISC. XXXVII.

On the Epiſtle for *Sexageſima* Sunday.

2 Cor. 11. 19——32. *Ye ſuffer Fools gladly, ſeeing you your ſelves are wiſe*, &c. 293

DISC.

DISC. XXXVIII.

On the Gospel for *Sexagesima* Sunday.

St. Luke 8. 4——16. *When much People were gather'd together, and were come to him out of every City*, &c. 301

DISC. XXXIX.

On the Epistle for *Quinquagesima* Sunday.

1 Cor. 13. 1, 2, to the end. *Tho I speak with the Tongues of Men and of Angels, and have not Charity*, &c. 309

DISC. XL.

On the Gospel for *Quinquagesima* Sunday.

Luke 18. 31, to the end. *Then Jesus took unto him the Twelve, and said unto them, Behold we go up to* Jerusalem, *&c.* 319

DISC. XLI.

On the Epistle for *Ash-Wednesday.*

Joel 2. 12——18. *Turn ye even to me, saith the Lord, with all your Heart, and with Fasting*, &c. 327

DISC. XLII.

On the Gospel for *Ash-Wednesday.*

St. Mat. 6. 16——21. *When ye fast, be not as the Hypocrites, of a sad Countenance*, &c. 336

DISC. XLIII.

On the Epistle for the first Sunday in *Lent.*

2 Cor. 6. 1——11. *We then, as Workers together with him, beseech you also*, &c. 345

DISC. XLIV.

On the Gospel for the first Sunday in *Lent.*

St. Mat. 4. 1——11. *Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the Wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil*, &c. 353

DISC. XLV.

On the Epistle for the second Sunday in *Lent.*

1 Thess. 4. 1——9. *We beseech you, Brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus*, &c. 363

DISC. XLVI.

On the Gospel for the second Sunday in *Lent.*

St. Mat. 15. 21—29. *Jesus went thence, and departed into the Coasts of* Tyre *and* Sidon, *&c.* 372

DISC. XLVII.

On the Epistle for the third Sunday in *Lent.*

Eph. 5. 1——15. *Be ye therefore Followers of God as dear Children*, &c. 380

DISC. XLVIII.

On the Gospel for the third Sunday in *Lent.*

St. Luke 11. 14——29. *Jesus was casting out a Devil, and it was dumb*, &c. 389

DISC.

DISC. XLIX.

On the Epiſtle for the fourth Sunday in *Lent*.

Gal. 4. 21, to the end. *Tell me, ye that deſire to be under the Law, do ye not hear the Law?* &c. 398

DISC. L.

On the Goſpel for the fourth Sunday in *Lent*.

St. John 6. 1——14. *Jeſus went over the Sea of* Galilee, *which is the Sea of* Tiberias, *&c.* 406

DISC. LI.

On the Epiſtle for the fifth Sunday in *Lent*.

Heb. 9. 11——16. *Chriſt being come an High Prieſt of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect Tabernacle, not made with Hands*, &c. 414

DISC. LII.

On the Goſpel for the fifth Sunday in *Lent*.

St. John 8. 46, to the end. *Jeſus ſaid, Which of you convinceth me of Sin?* &c. 423

DISC. LIII.

On the Epiſtle for the Sunday before *Eaſter*.

Phil. 2. 5——12. *Let this Mind be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus*, &c. 431

DISC. LIV.

On the Goſpel for the Sunday before *Eaſter*.

Mat. 27. 1——55. *When the Morning was come, all the Chief Prieſts and Elders of the People took counſel againſt Jeſus, to put him to death*, &c. 441

DISC. LV.

On the Epiſtle for *Good-Friday*.

Heb. 10. 1——26. *The Law having a Shadow of good things to come, and not the very Image of the things*, &c. 450

DISC. LVI.

On the Goſpel for *Good-Friday*.

St. John 19. 1——38. Pilate *therefore took Jeſus and ſcourg'd him; and the Soldiers platted a Crown of Thorns, and put it on his Head*, &c. 458

DISC. LVII.

On the Epiſtle for *Eaſter-Eve*.

1 Pet. 3. 17, to the end. *It is better, if the Will of God be ſo, that ye ſuffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing*, &c. 466

DISC. LVIII.

On the Goſpel for *Eaſter-Eve*.

St. Mat. 27. 57, to the end. *When the Even was come, there came a rich Man of* Arimathea, *nam'd* Joſeph, *who alſo himſelf was Jeſus's Diſciple*, &c. 472

DISC.

DISC. LIX.

On the Anthems for *Easter-Day.*

1 Cor. 5. part of the 7th and 8th Verse. *Christ our Passover is sacrific'd for us,* &c. 479

DISC. LX. On the same.

Rom. 6. 9—11. *Knowing that Christ being rais'd from the Dead, dieth no more, Death hath no more Dominion over him,* &c. 486

DISC. LXI. On the same.

1 Cor. 15. 20, 21, 22. *Now is Christ risen from the Dead, and become the First-fruits of them that slept,* &c. 493

DISC. LXII.

On the Epistle for *Easter-Day.*

Col. 3. 1——8. *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the Right Hand of God,* &c. 500

DISC. LXIII.

On the Gospel for *Easter-Day.*

St. John 20. 1——11. *The first Day of the Week cometh* Mary Magdalen *early, when it was yet dark, unto the Sepulchre, and seeth the Stone taken away from the Sepulchre,* &c. 508

DISC. LXIV.

On the Epistle for *Easter-Monday.*

Acts 10. 34——43. Peter *open'd his Mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no Respecter of Persons,* &c. 517

DISC. LXV.

On the Gospel for *Easter-Monday.*

St. Luke 24. 13——36. *Behold, two of his Disciples went that same Day to a Village call'd* Emmaus, *which was from* Jerusalem *about threescore Furlongs,* &c. 523

DISC. LXVI.

On the Epistle for *Easter-Tuesday.*

Acts 13. 26——42. *Men and Brethren, Children of the Stock of* Abraham, *and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is this Word of Salvation sent,* &c. 530

DISC. LXVII.

On the Gospel for *Easter-Tuesday.*

St. Luke 24. 36——48. *Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you,* &c. 537

DISC. LXVIII.

On the Epistle for the first Sunday after *Easter.*

1 St. John 5. 4——13. *Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the World; and this is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith,* &c. 541

DISC. LXIX.

On the Gospel for the first Sunday after *Easter*.

St. John 20. 19——24. *The same Day at Evening, being the first Day of the Week*, &c. 550

DISC. LXX.

On the Epistle for the second Sunday after *Easter*.

1 Pet. 2. 19, to the end. *This is thank-worthy, if a Man for Conscience towards God endure Grief, suffering wrongfully*, &c. 558

DISC. LXXI.

On the Gospel for the second Sunday after *Easter*.

St. John 10. 11—17. *Jesus said, I am the good Shepherd*, &c. 567

DISC. LXXII.

On the Epistle for the third Sunday after *Easter*.

1 Pet. 2. 11—18. *Dearly Beloved, I beseech you as Strangers and Pilgrims, abstain from fleshly Lusts, which war against the Soul*, &c. 576

DISC. LXXIII.

On the Gospel for the third Sunday after *Easter*.

John 16. 16——23. *Jesus said to his Disciples, A little while and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while and ye shall see me; because I go to the Father*, &c. 585

DISC. LXXIV.

On the Epistle for the fourth Sunday after *Easter*.

St. James 1. 17——22. *Every good Gift, and every perfect Gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights*, &c. 593

DISC. LXXV.

On the Gospel for the fourth Sunday after *Easter*.

St. John 16. 5——16. *Jesus said to his Disciples, Now I go my way to him that sent me, and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?* &c. 602

DISC. LXXVI.

On the Epistle for the fifth Sunday after *Easter*.

St. James 1. 22, to the end. *Be ye Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only, deceiving your own selves*, &c. 611

DISC. LXXVII.

On the Gospel for the fifth Sunday after *Easter*.

St. John 16. 23, to the end. *Verily, verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name, he will give it you*, &c. 622

PRAC-

PRACTICAL DISCOURSES *on all the* Collects, Epiſtles, *and* Goſpels *throughout the whole* Year, &c.

DISCOURSE I.

The EPISTLE for the Firſt Sunday in *Advent*.

Rom. xiii. 8. to the end.

Owe no Man any thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth another, hath fulfill'd the Law, &c.

THIS Day begins the Eccleſiaſtical Year, which is computed, not by the Courſe of the Sun, but by the Coming of our Saviour, or the Time of the Appearance of the Sun of Righteouſneſs. For the great Feſtival of Chriſtmas, or Chriſt's Birth-day, hath ſome Sundays going before it, and ſome following after it, the better to adorn and celebrate ſo great a Solemnity.

Thoſe that go before it, are the four Sundays in Advent, ſo call'd, becauſe they are to prepare us for Chriſt's Advent, or the time of his coming in the Fleſh; and of theſe, this Day is the firſt.

The Collect appointed for it, puts us in mind of a double Advent or Coming of the Son of God: the one reſpects

this Life, when he came as a Saviour, to *viſit us in great Humility*; the other reſpects the Life to come, when he ſhall come as a Judg, *in his glorious Majeſty, to judg both the Quick and the Dead.* And to prepare us for both, the Church teaches us to pray this day for *Grace, that we may caſt away the Works of Darkneſs, and put upon us the Armour of Light, now in the time of this mortal Life, that at the laſt Day we may riſe to the Life immortal.*

The Epiſtle for the Day, out of which the Collect was taken, directs us to thoſe Graces of God's Holy Spirit, and Acts of a good Life, that are neceſſary to qualify and fit us to celebrate the Coming of the Son of God in the Fleſh, and to make us Partakers of the Joy and Benefit of his Appearance. To which end,

It begins with the two great Duties of Juſtice and Charity, in theſe words; *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another.* Where the Apoſtle would have no other Debt lie upon us, but that of Love, which we ſhould be always owing and always paying: For Chriſtianity doth not diſpenſe with common Honeſty, or diſcharge us from any Debt either to Superiours, Inferiours or Equals; but rather confirms and heightens the Obligation, willing us to *render to all their Dues, Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Cuſtom to whom Cuſtom, and Honour to whom Honour:* that is, to be true and juſt in all our Dealings with all Men, and to be kindly-affection'd one to another in brotherly Love. Theſe are the two cardinal Vertues, upon which, as upon two Hinges, the whole Law turns; for *he that loveth another, hath fulfill'd the Law.* This excellent Grace of Charity contains and runs thro the whole Decalogue, eſpecially the Precepts of the ſecond Table, in which the Apoſtle here inſtanceth; *For this, thou ſhalt not commit Adultery, thou ſhalt not kill, thou ſhalt not ſteal, thou ſhalt not bear falſe Witneſs againſt thy Neighbour, thou ſhalt not covet, and if there be any other Commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this Saying, Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thy ſelf.* This he farther proves from that known Property of Love, that *it worketh no Ill to its Neighbour*, but on the contrary, is ever ready to do him all good Offices; and therefore *Love is the fulfilling*, or the Perfection *of the Law.*

Theſe great Duties are here the more earneſtly preſs'd, upon the account of the time, which was either the time of the Converſion of theſe *Romans* to the Chriſtian Faith, or the time of Chriſt's Coming, or the near Approach of

the

the Day of Redemption; all which ſhould encourage them to their Duty, and make them more watchful than they were before; which is the Senſe of theſe words, *That knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of Sleep, for now is our Salvation nearer than when we believ'd.* Where he calls upon them to prepare themſelves for the *Sun of Righteouſneſs*, which was *riſing upon them with Healing in his Wings*; and therefore it was high time to awake out of the Sleep of Sin, and to put on the Garments of Praiſe, to be ready to welcome him, according to that of *Iſaiah, Ariſe and ſhine, for thy Light is come, and the Glory of the Lord is riſen upon thee*; Iſa. 60. 1. *For now* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *is our Salvation*, or Deliverance promis'd by Chriſt, *much nigher at hand, than when we firſt receiv'd the Faith.* Which ſhould encourage us to be diligent and perſevere to the end.

And the rather, becauſe (as he goes on to tell us) *the Night is far ſpent, and the Day is at hand*; *let us therefore caſt off the Works of Darkneſs, and let us put on the Armour of Light.* Where by *the Night* we are to underſtand, either the Night of Ignorance and Darkneſs, in which theſe *Romans* were, before they receiv'd the Light of the Goſpel; or the Night of Affliction and Perſecution, in which they were for ſome time after the receiving it: both which are here ſaid to be in a great meaſure paſt and over with them.

As for the Night of Ignorance and Darkneſs, in which they were before their embracing of Chriſtianity, that was very black and diſmal; for during that time, they were truly ſaid to be benighted, *having their Underſtanding darken'd thro the Ignorance that was in them.* The wiſeſt of them walk'd, or rather wander'd on, in thick Darkneſs, being ſo bewilder'd, that they could not ſee or find the way that they ſhould go; by which means they fell into many groſs Errors, and vile Enormities, of which the Apoſtle minds them in the firſt Chapter of this Epiſtle.

And he tells the *Epheſians* the ſame thing; *Ye were ſometimes Darkneſs*, ſaith he, *Eph.* 5. 8. that is, in their Gentile State; they were not only dark, but Darkneſs it ſelf, for they were *without God, without Chriſt, and without Hope in the World*; as he tells them, *Eph.* 2. 12. They were *without God*, not without any God, for they had Gods many, and Lords many; they fell down to carv'd Images of their own making, they worſhipped the Sun,

Moon, and Stars, and the whole Hoſt of Heaven; yea, they ador'd their very Diſeaſes, and idoliz'd their own Infirmities. But they were without the Knowledg of the true God, that made Heaven and Earth, of whom they had heard little, and knew leſs. And as they were without God, ſo were they *without Chriſt*, of whom they had heard and known nothing, being *Aliens from the Commonwealth of* Iſrael, *and Strangers to the Covenant of Promiſe*; and ſo muſt be *without Hope*, of having any Salvation from him.

This was their gloomy and forlorn Condition, as it is naturally of all Men, and is here repreſented by the black Name of Night, and juſtly too, for the Darkneſs and Diſconſolateneſs, and the Dangers that attend it.

Now this *Night* (the Apoſtle tells them) *was far ſpent*, and ſo it was by the dawning of the Light of the Goſpel, which began to ſhine out upon them; by which the Miſts of Error were ſcatter'd, and their former Ignorance vaniſh'd like Darkneſs at the approach of the Sun, as it is with us at this day.

2*dly*, By the *Night* here, ſome underſtand the Night of Affliction and Perſecution, under which the primitive Chriſtians ſometimes were. 'Twas the hard Fate of the firſt Converts to Chriſtianity, to be preſently try'd in the Furnace of Affliction; for living under Heathen Emperors and Governours, that were bitter Enemies to Chriſt and his Religion, it could not be but his Followers muſt taſte of that bitter Cup, of which their Maſter drank to the very Dregs. By which means they groan'd under many ſad and heavy Preſſures, being for a while under a black Cloud of Perſecution, and enduring a long Night of Affliction.

Now this Night too was far ſpent with them, and their Deliverance was at hand, the black Cloud of Perſecution being in a great meaſure blown over, and the Day-Spring from on high dawning and viſiting them with his Salvation.

And this is *the Day*, which, in the next words, is ſaid *to be at hand*; namely, a Day of Light and Knowledg, in oppoſition to their former Darkneſs and Ignorance; and a Day of Deliverance and Salvation, in oppoſition to their former Sufferings and Perſecution. For the

1*ſt*, The Day of Light and Knowledg began to dawn upon them at their entrance upon Chriſtianity, and after ſhin'd out more and more to the perfect Day; being *turned*

ned from Darkneſs to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God. Now are ye light in the Lord, ſaith our Apoſtle to the *Epheſians*; your former Darkneſs is gone, and a clear convincing Light is let in upon your Soul. Now you can ſee the Danger and Deformity of your evil ways, in which you ſometime walk'd, and behold the Beauty of Holineſs, to which you are call'd. Now you are thorowly inſtructed in the Knowledg of the true God, and the right way of worſhipping him, to which you were before Strangers. You are now brought to the Knowledg of Chriſt, the only Saviour and Redeemer of Mankind, and ſo are come to ſome well-grounded Hopes of Salvation by him. And whereas the wiſeſt Heathens had but faint Conjectures of a future Life and the Immortality of the Soul, you are become better enlighten'd in both; Life and Immortality being now brought into a clearer Light by the Goſpel. Then,

2*dly*, For the Day of Salvation and Deliverance from Perſecution, that likewiſe drew nigh in the Apoſtles days, for then was their Salvation nearer than when they believ'd; but it hath been much nearer ſince: The Storm of Perſecution, as to the Rage and Violence of it from Heathen Princes, hath long ſince ceas'd, and the Church hath for many Ages enjoy'd much calmer and better Days under the happy Protection of Chriſtian Kings and Queens; inſomuch that Perſecution for Chriſtianity is now by the Bleſſing of God very rarely found or felt.

Thus we ſee what that Night is, which is here ſaid to be far ſpent, *viz.* a Night of Ignorance and Perſecution: And likewiſe what that Day is, which is ſaid to be at hand, *viz.* a Day of Knowledg and Salvation, or a Deliverance from temporal and eternal Evils.

But ſome interpret theſe words to a larger Senſe, taking Night here for the dark State of this preſent Life, which, for the Shortneſs and Gloomineſs of it, is often call'd and compar'd to Night; and this may be ſaid to be far ſpent by many of us. And by Day they underſtand the Day of the Reſurrection to another and better Life, which for its Length and Lightſomneſs is compar'd to Day; and this too draws nigh, and is at hand with all of us. In this ſenſe they take that of the Pſalmiſt, *Heavineſs endureth for a Night, but Joy cometh in the morning*; meaning, that Sorrow and Sadneſs may continue for the ſhort ſpace of this Life; but Joy and Gladneſs cometh in the Morning of the Reſurrection to another.

But in all these Senses the Apostle's Inference and Advice from them in the next words is very good; *Let us therefore cast off the Works of Darkness, and let us put on the Armour of Light.* Where,

(1.) From the Night's being far spent, we are exhorted to cast off the Works of Darkness; where by the Works of Darkness are meant all manner of Sin and Wickedness, which are so call'd, because they are commonly acted in the dark; they covet Darkness, and likewise lead to Blackness of Darkness for evermore. There is that natural Pravity and Deformity in Sin, that puts Men upon all manner of Arts and Shifts to hide the Evil and Shame of it; *He that doth evil* (saith our Saviour) *hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, lest his Deeds should be reprov'd.* And the Reason given for *Mens loving Darkness rather than Light*, is *because their Deeds are evil:* John 3. 19, 20.

But the Apostle, in the next Verse, mentions some particular Works of Darkness, which he would have all Christians to cast off against this time: And they are *Rioting and Drunkenness, Chambering and Wantonness, Strife and Envying.* All which being Deeds of Darkness, are highly unbecoming the Children of Light, and unfit us for our Saviour's Advent, or the Coming of this great Light into the World.

As for *Rioting and Drunkenness*, these are commonly Night Works, and shun the Light of the Day; for *they that are drunk* (saith the Apostle) *are drunk in the Night:* tho some in our Days have cast off this Modesty in sinning, and are not asham'd of this Vice even in the Face of the Sun.

As for *Chambering and Wantonness*, these too covet a Covering of Darkness and Secrecy, to hide the Foulness of the Vice. *The Adulterer watches the Twilight*, saith *Solomon*, and takes the Evening and the dark Nights to commit and conceal his Folly; *Prov.* 7. 9. Tho some Monsters of Wickedness are now arriv'd to that degree of Impudence, as to declare their Sins as *Sodom*, and even to boast and glory in their Shame.

As for *Strife and envying*, these likewise affect Disguises, and have recourse to palliating Pretences to cover their Obliquity; tho the Disguise often falls off, or grows thredbare, and the Hypocrisy is seen thro the Thinness of the Covering. And generally all sorts of Sinners have learnt from our first Parents to hide their Faults, and to gather

Fig.

Fig-leaves to cover the Shame and Deformity of their Vices. So that theſe, and all other kinds of Sin and Wickedneſs, are the Works of Darkneſs, which we are here call'd upon to caſt off; that is, not only to avoid the practice, but to abandon the love and liking of them; to hate every falſe way, and to *have no fellowſhip with ſuch unfruitful Works of Darkneſs, but rather reprove them.*

(2.) From the Day's being at hand, we are directed to put upon us the *Armour of Light*; where by the Armour of Light, we are to underſtand the Graces of God's Holy Spirit, which being given to us, furniſh and fortify the Mind, and at once adorn and arm the Soul. They are call'd Armour, from the Safeguard and Defence they give us; and Armour of Light, becauſe they guide our Feet and direct our Steps. Of this kind is the Armour mention'd by the Apoſtle, in the Epiſtle to the *Epheſians*, where he ſpeaks of the *Girdle of Truth*, to faſten Knowledg upon the Mind, and to fortify it againſt Error; of the *Breaſtplate of Righteouſneſs*, to arm it with Integrity, and to preſerve it from evil Practices; of the *Shield of Faith*, to guard it againſt the Aſſaults of Temptation; and of the *Helmet of Salvation*, to ſecure it from all preſent and future Dangers. Theſe we are to put on, not only as Clothing to keep us warm, but as Armour to defend us in all Aſſaults of our Enemies. But the Apoſtle minds us here of two Pieces of this Armour of Light, which he wills us to put on; and they are, Honeſty towards Men, and Piety towards God: the former is expreſs'd by *walking honeſtly as in the day*, the latter by *putting on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

1. I ſay, we are exhorted to *walk honeſtly as in the day*, ver. 13. that is, to avoid all Night-revellings, together with all Acts of Diſhoneſty, Deceit and Fraud, which covet falſe Lights, and falſe Arts to eſcape diſcovery; and to do things fair and honeſt in the ſight of all Men. Theſe things can bear the Light, and are both able and willing to be ſeen; they do not skulk or hide their Heads, but rather court than fly Obſervation: call'd therefore the *Armour of Light*, becauſe they arm us againſt Shame and Fear, and bring us off with Honour and Triumph. This is to *walk as Children of Light*, and of the Day, and not of Night and Darkneſs, *Eph.* 5. 8. 1 *Theſſ.* 5. 5.

2. We are exhorted to *put on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, as the beſt Armour of proof againſt all Evil, *ver.* 14. Now

the putting on Chriſt cannot be meant of his Perſon, nor barely of his Name or Profeſſion; tho *as many as are baptiz'd into Chriſt are*, in ſome ſenſe, ſaid *to put on Chriſt*, by becoming Members of Chriſt's Body; *Gal.* 3.27. Yet ſomething elſe is here imply'd in that Expreſſion, *viz.* the putting on the Vertues of Chriſt, and adorning our Souls with the Graces of his Holy Spirit. 'Tis to be cloth'd with his Humility, to be array'd in his Purity, and to be inveſted with the Robes of his Righteouſneſs or Integrity. And theſe we are to put on, not as Garments that may be put off again, but as Habits that are ſtill to be kept on, and continue as the ſtanding Furniture and Ornaments of the Soul. This is elſewhere expreſs'd by *putting off the old Man, which is corrupt according to the ſinful Luſts*; and by *putting on the new Man, which after God is created in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs.* And he that hath thus put on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in the Purity of his Nature and Image, will *make no proviſion for the Fleſh to fulfil the Luſts thereof*; but will learn to *purify himſelf, even as he is pure*: which is the beſt Wedding-garment we can put on, to meet the Bridegroom of our Souls.

Thus we ſee the Drift and Deſign of the Epiſtle for this Day, which is to lay aſide all wicked and ſinful Practices, that unfit us for the Coming of our Saviour; and to adorn our ſelves with all thoſe Graces and Vertues, that ſerve to qualify us for his Advent, and to prepare us for the great Feſtival of his Nativity.

To conclude then, let us from hence learn, *1ſt*, To caſt off all the Works of Darkneſs, which are put to ſhame and diſcomfited by the Light. Let us avoid the Night-works of Rioting and Drunkenneſs, of Chambering and Wantonneſs, of Strife and Envying, which cannot bear the Light, but ſeek Darkneſs and Diſguiſes to cover their Foulneſs and Deformity. The Night of Ignorance and Perſecution is now farther ſpent with us, than it was with theſe *Romans*, and we are better inſtructed in the Evil and Danger of all ſinful Courſes; and therefore it will not become us to live any longer in them, for if we do, *this will be our Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and we love Darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe our Deeds are evil.* Remember that 'tis beneath the Dignity of a Man to do what he dares not own, and to covet Masks and Vizards to hide the Uglineſs of his ways; eſpecially con-

consid'ring, that they will e'er long be expos'd before Angels and Men, to his eternal Shame and Confusion of Face; which should make us hate all those things that hate the Light.

2*dly*, Let us put on the Armour of Light, which will defend us from all Shame and Rebuke now, and at last bring us to the Light of everlasting Life. Let us *have our Loins girt with Truth, having on the Breast-plate of Righteousness, and our Feet shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace*; that being thus arm'd as it were *Cap-a-pe*, we may be furnish'd with spiritual Strength enough to vanquish all Temptations, and to quench all the fiery Darts of Satan: looking for the blessed Hope and Appearance of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, especially now in the time of this mortal Life, when the Son of God came to visit us in great Humility, that we may be prepar'd for his second Coming in his glorious Majesty, and from this mortal Life may be translated to a blessed Immortality: which God grant, for the Merits of Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all Glory and Honour now and for evermore.

DISCOURSE II.

The GOSPEL for the First Sunday in *Advent*.

St. Matthew xxi. 1——14.

When they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, *and were come to* Bethpage, *unto the Mount of Olives; then sent Jesus two of his Disciples, saying unto them, Go unto the Village over against you, and straitway ye shall find an Ass tyed, and a Colt with her; loose them, and bring them unto me*, &c.

THE Epistle for this Day puts us in mind of Christ's Coming, and our preparing for it, by casting off the Works of Darkness, and putting on the Armour of Light, that we may meet and welcome this Sun of Righteousness.

The

The Collect prays for the ſame, and withal minds us of the Manner of his Coming; and that was, in great Humility. Accordingly,

This Goſpel for the Day acquaints us with his humble, and yet triumphant Entry into *Jeruſalem*. The Relation of it conſiſts of two parts:

The *Firſt* is, of the Meanneſs and Humility of his Garb and Equipage in his Entrance to the City; for he was not mounted on any ſtately Steed, or triumphant Chariot, but came riding on an Aſs, the dulleſt and moſt deſpicable of all Creatures.

The *Second* is, of the Pomp and Glory of his paſſing through it; which was, with great Shouts and Acclamations of the People. Of both theſe we have ſome account in this Goſpel.

It begins with a Narration of the Circumſtances of Time and Place that went before it, in theſe words; *When they drew nigh unto* Jeruſalem, *and were come to* Bethpage *or* Bethany (a Town about a mile diſtant from *Jeruſalem*, and ſituate at the foot of the *Mount of Olives*, ſo call'd from the many Olive-Trees that were planted there) *then ſent Jeſus two of his Diſciples* (ſuppos'd to be *Peter* and *John*) *ſaying unto them, Go ye into the Village over againſt you, and ſtraitway ye ſhall find an Aſs tyed, and a Colt with her; looſe them, and bring them unto me.* The Meſſage ſeem'd ſtrange to them at firſt, not knowing the End or Deſign of it: however, that they might not doubt of ſpeeding, he farther added, *And if any Man ſay ought unto you, ye ſhall ſay, The Lord hath need of them; and ſtraitway he will ſend them.* Where we may obſerve, that tho he were Lord of all, yet would he invade no one's Property, without asking leave and giving ſatisfaction.

But why did our Lord make choice of ſuch a dull contemptible Creature as an Aſs, to ride into the great City of *Jeruſalem*; which, one would think, ſhould rather expoſe him to Scorn, than procure him any Honour or Reception worthy of him? Why, the next words will unriddle that matter: *All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was ſpoken by the Prophet, ſaying, Tell the Daughter of* Zion, *behold! thy King cometh unto thee, meek, ſitting upon an Aſs, and a Colt the Foal of an Aſs.* This Prophecy is extant, *Zech.* 9. 9. where

where many Circumstances of this Entrance of our Saviour into *Jerusalem*, are foretold and describ'd.

For his Person, he is there stil'd a King; *Behold thy King cometh!* And so indeed he was, being the Son of *David*, to whom the Kingdom descended. So the Prophecy cited by St. *Peter* declares, *Acts* 2. 30. *God hath sworn with an Oath unto* David, *that of the Fruit of his Loins according to the Flesh he would raise up Christ to sit on his Throne*: tho he did not think fit for some time to ascend this Throne, but rather conceal'd than claim'd any Title to it. When the *Jews* would have made him a King, he convey'd himself invisibly out of the Press, and wrought a Miracle (as one hath observ'd) to avoid an Advancement; and that, as he tells them after, because his time for that was not yet come. Tho he went up thrice a year to *Jerusalem* for many Years together, according to the Custom of the *Jews*, yet he never made any Overture or Semblance of being King of the *Jews*, before this last time of his Entry, when, according to the Prophecy of *Zachary*, his time was come of entring *Jerusalem* as a King; which he accordingly did with very humble Pomp, for he was mounted only on an Ass, and a Colt the Foal of an Ass: and that too was done merely for the fulfilling of this Prophecy, which was accomplish'd at this time; for he who was to fulfil all Righteousness, would not leave any one Prophecy relating to the Messiah unfulfil'd, telling us, that *Heaven and Earth may pass away, but not one jot or tittle of God's Word must pass away or fall to the ground*; Mat. 5. 'Twas in order to this, that Christ sent his Disciples on this Errand, who disputed not his Commands, but readily obey'd them. So the next words tell us, that *the Disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the Ass and the Colt, and put on them their Clothes, and they set him thereon.* St. *Mark* tells us of the Colt, that it was not before back'd, for it was one *whereon never Man sate*, Mark 11. 2. And when they loos'd the Colt to carry it away, 'tis said, the Owner and others standing by, ask'd the Disciples, *What do ye loosing the Colt?* And when they reply'd, as Jesus commanded, that the Lord had need of them, they immediately *let them go*: the Lord invisibly charm'd the Owner's Spirit to surrender them, upon hearing the Lord had need of them. When they had brought the Ass and Colt to him, instead of a Saddle and Trappings, they put their Clothes on them; and in this mean Furniture they

set

ſet him thereon: and being thus mounted, he rode on to *Jeruſalem*, attended only with a Company of poor Fiſhermen his Diſciples, and a Rabble of the meaner ſort. By this was fulfill'd that part of the Prophecy of *Zachary*, *Behold thy King cometh meek and lowly!* for in this March nothing but Meekneſs and Innocence went in triumph, and only Humility rode in ſtate. Now if we compare this with the Magnificence and Splendor of the *Roman* Triumphs, which were ſet forth with all the Pomp and Pageantry that the World could afford, being crown'd with Laurels, and adorn'd with Works of a rack'd Invention and immenſe Charge; this of our Saviour's will appear to a carnal Eye but as a Mock-Triumph, or a Triumph in Burleſque, wherein the Attendants were mean, and the humble Conqueror came riding on an Aſs, the moſt abject and deſpicable of all the Beaſts of Burden. And yet if we look more narrowly into this ſolemn Proceſſion of our Saviour, and with a ſpiritual Eye obſerve the Glory that appear'd under all theſe Circumſtances of Meanneſs and Poverty; we ſhall find the Glory hereof far to excel the Triumphs of all the Princes in the World: for his Greatneſs appear'd under the Veil of all his Meanneſs, and his Divinity ſhined through the Mantle of his Humility. And this will lead us,

Secondly, From the humble to the glorious part of this our Saviour's Entrance into *Jeruſalem*. Tho there was little or nothing of human Invention or Coſt ſeen in it, yet the Contrivance and Effects of Divine Wiſdom manifeſtly appear'd therein; for 'twas the fulfilling of a Prophecy of him many hundred Years before, and a Lecture of Lowlineſs and Meekneſs to all his Followers ever after. Tho there was no Oſtentation of worldly Pomp, yet there were Trophies of a higher and more ſpiritual nature carry'd before him; he rode on triumphing over Principalities and Powers, over the Rulers of the Darkneſs of this World, and ſpiritual Wickedneſs in high places, and led Satan the Prince of the Air in Chains. In a word, his holy Life and Doctrine, his Miracles and mighty Works gave a greater Luſtre, and rais'd more Admiration, than any earthly Greatneſs or Grandeur could give him. And this was moſt ſuitable to the Nature and Deſign of his ſpiritual Kingdom, which was not like earthly Princes to make a ſhow of Glory and Greatneſs, but to bring them into Contempt; and not to triumph in the vain things of this World, but to triumph over them.

And

And yet in this his March and Entrance into *Jerusalem*, he wanted not many Signs and Tokens of worldly Pomp; for *great Multitudes spread their Garments in the way*: a Ceremony antiently used at the Inauguration of a King, as we read, 2 *Kings* 9. 13. *Others cut down Branches from the Trees, and strewed them in the way*: a sign of publick Rejoicing and Honour formerly used, as it is yet at this day. The Branches they cut down were from the Palm-Trees, and their strewing them in the way betoken'd their Wishes of Victory and Prosperity, as appears by the next words; *And the Multitudes that went before and follow'd after, cry'd, saying, Hosanna to the Son of* David! that is, they follow'd him with Shouts and Acclamations, usual at the sight and appearance of Princes. The Term *Hosanna* is a *Hebrew* word, and signifies the same with *Salva quæso, Save I pray*: 'tis suppos'd to be taken out of the 118th Psalm, ver. 25. *Save us, O Lord, send us now Prosperity.* 'Twas used by the *Jews* in the Feast of Tabernacles, when they were commanded to *take Boughs of goodly Trees, and Branches of Palm-Trees, and to rejoice before the Lord*; Lev. 23. 40. From hence the Custom of cutting down Boughs, and carrying Branches of Palm-Trees, was deriv'd to our Saviour's time, and from thence to ours: and *Hosannas* were used as Acclamations of Joy and Prayer, as *Vivat Rex*, God save the King or Queen, are to this day.

Now these *Hosannas* are here said to be sounded *to the Son of* David, that is, to Christ who descended from the Loins and Linage of *David*, and was thereby own'd and receiv'd as the true Messias, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the World. To which Acclamations they added that Divine Hymn or Doxology, *Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord!* which words likewise are taken out of the 118th Psalm, ver. 26. where the same words are spoken literally of *David*, upon his Election and Anointing to the Kingdom of *Israel*, and mystically and prophetically of this Son of *David*, the promis'd Messias and King of *Israel*, to whom they are here apply'd. And because for these words chiefly is this Gospel appointed to be read for this Day, 'twill be requisite to speak a little to them.

And, 1*st*, He is here pronounc'd and proclaim'd *Blessed*; that is, one to whom all Blessing and Praise is due, not only for the Greatness of his Person, but the Goodness of his Message, and his Kindness to the World. *Behold! from henceforth all Generations shall call me blessed* (said the Blessed Virgin)

Virgin) for being the Mother of our Saviour; and indeed ſhe was highly favour'd among Women, for having that Honour. But the Son is far more worthy to be call'd *Bleſſed*, ſeeing *all the Nations of the Earth are bleſſed in him*, and receive Bleſſings from him; for which reaſon he is juſtly ſtil'd *God bleſſed for evermore*, Rom. 9. 5.

2*dly*, He is deſcrib'd here by the Title of ὁ ἐρχόμενος, *he that cometh*; *Bleſſed is he that cometh*. In the Old Teſtament he is ſometimes ſtil'd *Shiloh*, which ſignifieth one that is ſent, *Gen.* 49. and ſometimes *Meſſiah*, which ſignifies one anointed for the Work of Man's Salvation. In the New Teſtament, among other Titles, he is call'd ὁ ἐρχόμενος, *he that cometh*, or *he that ſhould come*. So St. *John*'s Diſciples ask'd him, *Art thou he that ſhould come?* Mat. 11. 3. And elſewhere, *Where is he that ſhould come?* He was before *the Deſire and the Hope of all Nations*, and was earneſtly expected at the time of his Coming, and ſo became *the Joy of all People*. And as in thoſe Countries, where the Sun is a long time abſent, when it begins to appear, the People meet it with Shouts, crying out, ἰδοὺ ὁ Ἥλιος, Behold the Sun! ſo when this Sun of Righteouſneſs aroſe to the benighted World, he was welcom'd with Acclamations of Joy, ſaying, ἰδοὺ ὁ υἱος, Behold the Son of God, *who taketh away the Sins of the World!* and, *Bleſſed is he that cometh*. To which is added,

3*dly*, The Miſſion or Authority by which he came; and that is, *in the Name of the Lord: Bleſſed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord*. To come in the Name of the Lord, is either to come by his Appointment, or to come with his Authority; both which may be well enough meant in this place.

For, (1.) Chriſt came by his Appointment; he was anointed to this Office before the World began, and both the Time and Manner of his Coming was order'd by the determinate Counſel and Foreknowledg of God. Chriſt's Kingdom was of God's Aſſignation; *Behold I have ſet my King*, ſaith he, *upon my holy Hill of* Zion! *Pſal.* 2. 6. And the Peoples ſaluting him as the Meſſiah, was but the publiſhing the Divine Will and Counſel; which made him come in his Name.

And ſo he did, (2.) by coming with his Authority: he acted as God, and exercis'd a Divine Authority during his ſtay in the World, for he reign'd in and over the Hearts of Men; he forgave Sins, and heal'd all the Maladies both of

Soul

Soul and Body. And well may he be call'd *Blessed*, who thus came in the Name of the Lord; or, as others read the Words, *Blessed in the Lord's Name be he that was thus sent by him, and to act for him in the Work of redeeming and reconciling Mankind unto him.* And therefore, *Glory be to God on high*, and *Hosanna in the highest.*

Thus we see the humble Pomp of our Saviour's glorious Entrance into *Jerusalem*, where tho his Equipage and Attendants were mean, yet his Reception was great; for he was acknowledg'd as a King, a great Prophet, as the Son of God and the Saviour of the World, and receiv'd accordingly: for *when he was come into* Jerusalem, *all the City was mov'd*, saying with astonishment, *Who is this?* And being answer'd by the Multitude, *This is Jesus, the Prophet of* Nazareth *of* Galilee; St. *Luke* tells us, that they all began to rejoice for their long-expected Messias, and praised God with a loud Voice, for the mighty things they had seen.

And now having follow'd our Saviour to *Jerusalem*, and waited upon him into the City, we are next to observe his Actions and Behaviour there. And here the first thing we read of, was his going *into the Temple*, and his first Visit was to the House of God; which shews the great Regard he had to that Holy Place, and by his Example teaches us to do the same. But at his coming there, the Joy of his Reception was turn'd into a just Indignation for the Profanation he found in it: for he found the Temple turn'd into a Market, where sundry Wares and Commodities were *bought and sold*: there were *the Tables of Mony-Changers, and the Seats of them that sold Doves*; the sight of which mov'd our Saviour's Zeal and Indignation against them. The Pretence they had for it, was, that the things sold there were all necessary for Offerings and Sacrifices, to be ready for the Service of the Temple; as Beasts for Sacrifice, Incense, Wine, and Doves, which were commanded for Offerings; all which were brought and sold there, to be at hand as the Occasion and Devotion of those times requir'd. As for the Mony-Changers, they alledg'd that they had Tables there to exchange Mony into the *Jewish* Shekels and Half-Shekels, appointed by God for Trespass-Offerings and other Occasions, as we read, *Lev.* 5. 15.

All which Excuses weigh'd nothing with our Saviour, who could not see his Father's House made a House of Merchandize,

chandize, knowing it to be ſet apart and devoted only to Sacred Uſes, and not to be proſtituted or profan'd by ſuch ſecular Purpoſes. And therefore we read here, that he *caſt out all them that bought and ſold in the Temple, and overthrew the Tables of the Mony-Changers, and the Seats of them that ſold Doves.* St. *Mark* adds, that he *would not ſuffer that any Man ſhould carry any Veſſel thorow the Temple,* Mark 11. 16. So tender was he of the leaſt Deſecration of thoſe Holy Places! St. *John* tells us, that he did this with a more than ordinary Zeal and Paſſion; for he made a Scourge himſelf, and drove them all out of the Temple, with the Sheep and Oxen, and pour'd out the Changers Mony and overthrew their Tables, and ſaid to them that ſold Doves, Take theſe things hence, and make not my Father's Houſe a Houſe of Merchandize. By which he fulfill'd that Prophecy of him mention'd by *David*, and here remember'd by his Diſciples, that it was written, *The Zeal of thy Houſe hath eaten me up*, Pſal. 69. 9. & John 2. 15, 16, 17. After which, he clos'd his Diſcourſe with this ſharp Rebuke; *It is written, my Houſe ſhall be called the Houſe of Prayer, but ye have made it a Den of Thieves.*

Thus I have briefly conſider'd the ſeveral things contain'd in the Goſpel for this Day: From whence we may infer the following Leſſons. As,

From the Meanneſs of our Saviour's Equipage and Appearance, we may learn the great Leſſon of Humility, and Contempt of the World. This is what he recommends to us by his own Example; *Learn of me* (ſaith he) *for I am meek and lowly in Heart.* He who was Lord of all, might, if he had pleas'd, have enter'd *Jeruſalem* with all the Pomp and Magnificence that Heaven and Earth could have dreſs'd him out withal: he might have come with a numerous Train of Angels, and the Heavenly Hoſt to adorn his Triumph, as alſo with all the Gallantry and Greatneſs that the Earth could afford; but he choſe rather to appear in a Dreſs of Humility, on purpoſe to beat down the Price of the World, and to expoſe its admir'd Vanities. At his Birth, when he was worſhip'd by ſome Kings, and fear'd by others, he was content to lie in a Manger; and when he fed many thouſands by Miracles, he was willing himſelf to be in a condition of Want and Hunger, merely to inſtil the Leſſons of Mortification and Self-denial; to teach the Honoura-

Honourable to be humble, the Mighty to be meek, and to use their Power not for Pride and Ostentation, but for the Good and Benefit of their Inferiours. And now how can any that call themselves his Followers, affect that Glory and Greatness, which he so much despis'd; or glue their Hearts to the World, which he thus endeavour'd to wean them from?

Lastly, From Christ's whipping the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, let us learn to have a due Regard for the Church or House of God, and to honour the Place where his Honour dwells. God hath made that the Seat of his special Presence and Residence, where he hath promis'd to meet and bless his People. He hath set apart and consecrated those Holy Places to his own Service; let us not then profane them, by putting them to common Uses: let us not make the House of God a place of Traffick and Merchandize, for that is to make it a Den of Thieves; nor let us use it as a place of common Eating and Drinking, for that is to despise the Church of God: much less, let us prefer Barns, Halls, or Ware-houses before it. But let us, as God hath commanded, reverence his Sanctuary, by frequenting and shewing all due Honour to it; so shall we shortly be translated from these earthly Tabernacles to the Mansions of Bliss and Glory.

DISCOURSE III.

The EPISTLE for the Second Sunday in *Advent.*

Rom. xv. 4——14.

Whatſoever Things were written afore-time, were written for our Learning, that we, thro Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures, might have Hope. Now the God of Patience and Conſolation grant you to be like-minded, &c.

THE Church, to prepare us farther for Chriſt's Coming in the Fleſh, ſends us this Day, as Chriſt did the *Phariſees*, to the Holy Scriptures, for they are they that teſtify of him; all the Prophecies and Promiſes extant of him, being recorded there for our Uſe and Benefit. The Collect for the Day acquaints us, that God hath caus'd all Holy Scriptures to be written for our Learning, and therefore prays, that we may in ſuch wiſe hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digeſt them, that by Patience and Comfort of his Holy Word we may embrace, and ever hold faſt the bleſſed Hope of everlaſting Life, which he hath given us in our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.

The Epiſtle for the Day, out of which this Collect was taken, tells us likewiſe in the beginning, that *whatſoever things were written afore-time, were written for our Learning:* that is, the Prophecies of old, as well as the latter Precepts or Promiſes, were all deſign'd for our Inſtruction, *that we thro Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures might have Hope*; meaning, that we may have Patience in wanting, Joy in waiting for them, and Comfort in the fulfilling and enjoying of them. So that theſe Words, which direct the Service of this Day, hold forth to us,

Firſt, The Excellency and Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, which are here ſaid to be *written*, that is, of God, or Men inſpir'd by him. *Secondly*,

Secondly, The Uſefulneſs of them; they were *written for our Learning*. And,

Thirdly, The End and Deſign of them, *that we thro Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures might have Hope*.

Firſt, I ſay, we have here the Excellency and Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, which are ſaid to be written of God, or Men commiſſion'd and inſpir'd by him: So St. *Paul* expreſly tells us, *All Scripture is given by Inſpiration of God*, 2 Tim. 3. 16. And St. *Peter* to the ſame purpoſe, *Prophecy came not in old time by the Will of Man, but Holy Men of God ſpake and writ as they were mov'd by the Holy Ghoſt*; 2 Pet. 1. 21. This is affirm'd here of the Prophets, who writ and foretold afore-time of the coming of the Meſſias; and the ſame is ſaid by the Apoſtles, that they follow'd not any cunningly devis'd Fables, *when they made known unto you the Power and Coming of the Lord Jeſus, but were Eye-Witneſſes of his Majeſty*; ver. 16. And both confirm'd the Truth of what they deliver'd concerning him, by thoſe Miracles and mighty Works, that made it gain Belief every where. If any queſtion'd the Truth of their Doctrine or Miſſion, they preſently convinc'd them, by healing the Sick, giving Sight to the Blind, Feet to the Lame, yea, and Life to the Dead; and by many Miracles ſet the Matter beyond all Doubt or Contradiction. And as they thus confirm'd what they wrote by the Broad Seal of Heaven, ſo did they ſeal the Truth of what they deliver'd with their own Blood, laying down their Lives in the defence of it, and taking it upon their Death, that all they had ſaid was true, which Men are not wont to do for Fables or Impoſtures. Beſides, the Excellency and Sublimity of the Truths contain'd in the Holy Scriptures, ſhew them to be Divine; they carry the Stamp of a Divine Authority upon them, and plainly ſhew that Fleſh and Blood could never reveal them.

Add to all this, the univerſal Conſent of all Ages, who have receiv'd theſe ſacred Writings for the infallible Dictates of a Divine Spirit; and the conſtant Tradition of the Church, which hath all along own'd and handed them down to us as the Oracles of God: all which is enough to ſatisfy any unprejudic'd Perſon of the Divine Authority of theſe Writings.

Then for their Antiquity, the Text minds us of their being *written aforetime*; that is, of a very antient date:

for no Writings can vie Antiquity with those of *Moses* and the Prophets, nor have convey'd to us such sublime and sacred Mysteries. And this will lead me,

Secondly, To the Usefulness of the Holy Scriptures, which are here said to be *written for our Learning*. They teach us our Duty both to God and Man, and shew us how to demean our selves in all the Capacities and Stations of human Life; yea, they *are able* (as St. *Paul* told *Timothy*) *to make us wise unto Salvation, thro Faith which is in Christ Jesus*; 2 Tim. 3. 15, 16. for they contain in them all things necessary to Salvation, and direct in the way that leads to Eternal Life: and therefore he commends *Timothy*, that he had *known them from a Child*, and been educated in them from his Youth; adding, that they came from God, and are *profitable for Doctrine*, that is, to teach us what things ought to be known and believ'd by us; *for Reproof*, namely of such Errors and false Doctrines as are to be rejected; *for Correction*, viz. of the Vices and corrupt Practices of Mens Lives; *for Instruction in Righteousness*, that is, to instruct them in the Principles of a holy Life, and the Precepts of a Christian Conversation: *That the Man of God may be perfect, and thorowly furnish'd unto all good Works*; that the Teacher of God's Word may be furnish'd himself with all Divine Knowledg, and be able to instruct others in all Parts of their Duty. By which we see something of the Usefulness and Benefit of the Holy Scriptures, which *were written for our Learning*, to instruct us both in our Work and in our Wages, to reveal to us the Mind and Will of God, and to shew us the way in which we are to go. So that we are not left to the blind and uncertain Conduct of Nature, or to grope out our way in the dark; but God is pleas'd to give us a Light from Heaven, to direct us in our way thither, even his Holy Word to be *a Light unto our Feet, and a Lanthorn to our Paths*. And this will lead me to the

Third Thing to be consider'd, *viz.* the End and Design of the Holy Scriptures, deliver'd in these words, *That we thro Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures might have Hope*. Where by Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures, we are to understand that Patience which is taught, and that Comfort which is administer'd to us by God's Holy Word; both which give us well-grounded Hopes of Mercy and Salvation

vation in Jeſus Chriſt: for the Holy Scriptures give us the beſt Arguments for Patience in all Conditions, and adminiſter the higheſt Cordials in all Afflictions, by ſhewing us the Love of God in them all, and that the end of them will be everlaſting Life.

To this the Apoſtle, in the next words, ſubjoins this Prayer; *Now the God of Patience and Conſolation grant you to be like-minded one towards another in Jeſus Chriſt:* meaning, that God, who had ſhew'd ſo much Patience and Conſolation towards them, would give them Grace to do the like to one another, to join together in the Unity of Faith and Charity, according to the Precept and Example of Jeſus Chriſt; *That they may with one Mind and one Mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

And becauſe there were at that time great Feuds and Animoſities between the *Jews* and the *Gentiles*, the one maligning and ſeparating from the other, the Apoſtle exhorts them, in the next Verſe, to *receive one another* into the ſame Fellowſhip and Communion, *as Chriſt alſo receiv'd us to the Glory of God.*

The *Jews*, at that time, boaſted of their antient Privileges, that they were God's peculiar People, to whom appertain'd the Adoption, the giving of the Law, and the Promiſes, whoſe were the Fathers, of whom as concerning the Fleſh Chriſt came; and ſo deſpis'd the *Gentiles*, as Aliens to the Commonwealth of *Iſrael*, and Strangers to the Covenant of Promiſe.

The *Gentiles*, on the other hand, being newly admitted into Chriſt's Church by Baptiſm, and receiving the Holy Ghoſt, contemn'd the *Jews* as Perſons caſt out of Favour, and look'd upon themſelves as the only Perſons receiv'd into it; by which means there was a great Enmity and Variance between them.

Now the Apoſtle, to heal this Breach, tells them, that God had receiv'd them both, and united them into one Flock; and therefore they ought to receive one another, and to unite in his Worſhip and Service, and thereby to glorify God together.

This he confirms and moves them to from the Holy Scriptures, telling the *Gentiles*, in the next Verſe, that *Chriſt was the Miniſter of Circumciſion to the* Jews, *for the Truth of God, to confirm the Promiſes made unto the Fathers*; meaning, that Chriſt came firſt to the *Jews*, and preach'd unto them, by *Moſes* and the Prophets, the Truths of

God, making good the Promiſes made of old to them, beyond all other People. He likewiſe tells the *Jews*, in the following words, *That the* Gentiles *too might glorify God, for the Mercy ſhew'd to them*, in making Chriſt an Inſtrument of his Mercy to them; and ſo occaſion is given them of magnifying his Name, as it is written in the Book of Pſalms, *For this cauſe I will confeſs thee among the* Gentiles, *and ſing Praiſes unto thy Name*; Pſal. 18. 49. And again he ſaith, *Rejoice, ye* Gentiles, *with his People*, Deut. 32. 43. where the *Gentiles* are bid to join with the *Jews* in bleſſing and praiſing God. To the ſame purpoſe is that of the Pſalmiſt, *Praiſe the Lord all ye* Gentiles, *and laud him all ye People*; Pſal. 117. 1. And again *Iſaias* ſaith, *There ſhall be a Root of* Jeſſe; *and he that ſhall riſe to reign over the* Gentiles, *in him ſhall the* Gentiles *truſt*. This Place is quoted out of *Iſa.* 11. 10. where Chriſt, *the Root of* Jeſſe, *is ſaid to ſtand for an Enſign or Standard of the People, and that to it ſhall the* Gentiles *ſeek, and his Reſt ſhall be glorious*. By which we ſee what pains the Apoſtle ſeems to take to ſhew the Mercy of God, extended both to *Jew* and *Gentile*, and thereby convince them, that they ought not to deſpiſe, condemn, or ſeparate from one another, but to unite together in the Service of God; for the Partition-Wall between them is now broken down, and they are all one in Chriſt Jeſus, being equally admitted to the Privileges of the Temple, and ſo become one Flock and one Fold, under the great Shepherd and Biſhop of our Souls: which ſhould teach them not to wander or go into Parties and Factions, but to keep together, and with one Mind and one Mouth, or with one Heart and one Conſent, to glorify God the Father, and his Son Jeſus Chriſt: which that they might be the better enabled to do, the Apoſtle adds, in the Cloſe, this hearty and affectionate Prayer; *Now the God of Hope fill you with all Joy and Peace in believing, that ye may abound in Hope, thro the Power of the Holy Ghoſt*: that is, that God, on whom all our Hopes and Truſt are founded, would fill their Hearts with Joy and Peace, with Union and Concord in the Chriſtian Faith, that ſo all the Hopes and Promiſes of the Goſpel may be multiply'd upon them in great abundance, thro the working of God's Holy Spirit in them.

Thus I have briefly open'd to you the Senſe of this Day's Epiſtle, in which we have the Antiquity, the Authority, and

and the Uſefulneſs of the Holy Scriptures, which were written aforetime, and contain the Prophecies and Promiſes of a Saviour in the Old Teſtament, and the actual Appearance and Accompliſhment of them in the New, together with the happy Union of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, in the Faith and Hope of Salvation by Jeſus Chriſt: all which things were written for our Learning, that we thro Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

The Uſe that we are to make of it, is hinted to us in the Collect for this Day; to wit, that we ſhould hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digeſt theſe Holy Scriptures, that we may embrace and ever hold faſt the bleſſed Hope of everlaſting Life.

1. Then, we are exhorted diligently to *hear* the Holy Scriptures, as they are read and expounded to us; for *Faith comes by hearing* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *and hearing by the Word of God: How can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how can they hear without a Preacher?* Rom. 10. 14, 17. He that refuſes to hear can never learn; and they that turn the deaf Ear to God's Word, will never be wiſe unto Salvation. *Solomon* therefore often calls upon us to *hearken unto Wiſdom, and to give ear to Inſtruction.* The Prophet *Iſaiah* incourages to it with the hopes of Salvation, ſaying, *Hear, and your Souls ſhall live.* St. *James* bids us to *be ſwift to hear*, as the ſpeediſt way to Knowledg and Underſtanding; and to *receive with Meekneſs the ingrafted Word, that is able to ſave our Souls*; Jam. 1. 19, 21. St. *Peter* wills us, *as new-born Babes, to deſire the ſincere Milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby*; 1 Pet. 2. 2. to ſuck in God's Word with as eager an Appetite, as a Child does its Mother's Milk, in order to our Growth in Grace and Knowledg. And the Angel's Call to the Churches of *Aſia*, was, *He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit ſaith to the Churches.* All which ſhews the hearing of the Scriptures to be a neceſſary Duty of all Chriſtians, and juſtly reproves the Backwardneſs of ſuch as will not move over the Threſhold to hear the Word of God. But becauſe Hearing ſuppoſes Reading, we are,

2. Call'd upon to *read* the Holy Scriptures. *Give Attendance to Reading*, ſaith St. *Paul* to *Timothy*, 1 Tim. 4. 13. When a certain Lawyer came to our Saviour, and ſaid unto him, *Maſter, what muſt I do to inherit eternal Life?* he preſently ask'd him, *What is written in the Law, how readeſt thou?* Luke 10. 26. implying, that reading the Scriptures

was neceſſary to the knowing and doing the Will of God, and to be ſav'd by him. And when the young Man in the Goſpel came to him with the like Queſtion, he ſent him to the Law and the Prophets, to read there the Words of eternal Life. And indeed the Scriptures are the Book of Life, by which alone we can be taught to attain to it: *We have a ſure Word of Prophecy* (ſaith St. *Peter*) *to which we ſhall do well to take heed*, by reading and remembring of it; for St. *John* pronounces thoſe *Bleſſed, that read and hear the Words of this Prophecy, and keep thoſe things that are written therein, for the time is at hand*: Rev. 1. 3. By which we ſee the neceſſity of frequent reading the Word of God, to imprint it on our Minds, and to have it ready for our uſe, as occaſion ſhall require. Furthermore, we learn hence the Injuſtice and Cruelty of thoſe that keep the Bible from the People, by locking it up in a Language unknown to them, and hiding from them the Words of eternal Life: as alſo the extreme Folly and Danger of ſuch who neglect the reading of God's Word, or prefer vain, empty, and frothy Books before it.

3. We are here put in mind not only to hear and read, but to *mark* and obſerve the Holy Scriptures: for the bare hearing and reading of them are not ſufficient to the Ends of Salvation, for that will make them no better than a dead Letter, which hath no Life or Efficacy at all in it; 'tis the well weighing and conſidering of the Scriptures, that puts all the Virtue and Energy into them. A ſlight perfunctory Hearer of God's Word lets it paſs away as a Tale that is told, without leaving any Impreſſion behind it; and a careleſs curſory Reader can reap no Comfort or Benefit at all by it: it muſt get into the Head, and ſink down into the Heart, before it can have its due Effect upon us. And indeed the Matters contain'd in the Holy Scriptures are of ſo great Uſe, and of ſo mighty Importance to us, that they very well deſerve to be diligently mark'd and obſerv'd by us: they treat of things that concern our Life, and the eternal Well-being of our Souls; and therefore are to be heard with Attention, and heeded with the greateſt Intention of Mind: they are the Word of God, our great Maſter and Maker, and they deliver his Mind and Will concerning us; and it muſt argue a great Contempt of the Author, and the things contain'd in this Book, not to think them worthy of our Regard or Conſideration. It will become us therefore to look upon the Holy Scriptures, not as

the

the Word of Man, but of God, and ſo to mark and attend to them accordingly.

4. We are directed here not only to mark, but to *learn* the Holy Scriptures; that is, to ſearch into the true Senſe and Meaning of them, to underſtand them aright, and to make a good uſe of them; for the Apoſtle tells us of ſome that *wreſt the Scriptures to their own Deſtruction:* And we have known ſome who have perverted them to the Deſtruction of Kingdoms, to the maintaining of Errors, Hereſies, Schiſms, and Seditions, and have turn'd the Goſpel of Peace into a Trumpet of War and Rebellion. Not that the Scriptures give any Countenance or Encouragement to theſe things, but that Mens Prejudices and corrupt Deſigns either find or bring them there; and therefore we are to ſtudy and ſearch the Scriptures, and as the noble *Bereans* did with the Apoſtles Doctrine, examine whether things were ſo, *Acts* 17. 11. Since the Scriptures were written for our Learning, let us learn to know and uſe them aright, leſt we miſs of Scripture even in the Scripture, and turn the Word of Truth into Error and Fable; and ſo inſtead of being wiſe unto Salvation, we prove Fools and Truants to our own Deſtruction, being carry'd about with every Wind of Doctrine, and falling from our own Stedfaſtneſs.

Laſtly, We are bid not only to learn, but inwardly to digeſt the Holy Scriptures, and this is to be done by ſerious Study and Meditation. The Word of God is often call'd the Food of the Soul, that cheriſhes it to eternal Life. Now as Food muſt be taken in and digeſted, before it can turn into the Subſtance and Nouriſhment of the Body; ſo the Word muſt be receiv'd into the Heart, and thorowly ponder'd and digeſted there, before it can tend to the Comfort and Refreſhment of the Soul. We read of holy *Job*, that he prefer'd the Word of God before his *appointed Food:* And of *David*, that he made it his Meditation Day and Night. In like manner we pray in the Collect for this Day, that we may have Grace to hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digeſt the Holy Scriptures, which were writ for our Learning; and by thus receiving the ingrafted Word, 'twill be able to ſave our Souls. All that remains, is, to bleſs God for giving us the Holy Scriptures, which ſhew us the plain Path-way to Heaven, and to endeavour to walk by the Light and Directions of them in the whole Courſe of our Lives; ſo will they guide us by God's Grace here, and at laſt bring us to Glory.

DIS-

DISCOURSE IV.

The GOSPEL for the Second Sunday in *Advent*.

St. Luke xxi. 25——34.

And there ſhall be Signs in the Sun, and in the Moon, and in the Stars; and upon the Earth, Diſtreſs of Nations, with Perplexity, the Sea and the Waves roaring; Mens Hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after thoſe things that are coming upon the Earth, &c.

THIS Seaſon of *Advent* puts us in mind of a double Coming of Chriſt: the firſt is, His Coming as a Saviour, which was in great Humility; of which we have ſpoken in the foregoing Diſcourſes: The ſecond is, His Coming as a Judg, which will be in Power and great Glory; and of this I am now to ſpeak from the Goſpel for this Day, which treats of Chriſt's ſecond Coming to Judgment: An excellent Preparative for the approaching Remembrance of his firſt Coming. For if we welcome him as a Saviour, we need not fear him as a Judg; and if we are prepar'd for his Judgment, we may rejoice at his Nativity. From the Goſpel then for this Day, I muſt ſhew,

Firſt, The Certainty of Chriſt's Second Coming.
Secondly, The Signs and the Forerunners of it.
Thirdly, The Manner and Circumſtances of it. And,
Fourthly, The End and Deſign of it. Of each of which diſtinctly. And,

Firſt, Of the Certainty of his Second Coming. This is here plainly ſuppos'd, and in ſundry other places more plainly expreſs'd. Enoch, *the ſeventh from* Adam, *prophesied of it, ſaying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thouſands of his Angels*; Jude, *ver.* 14. *Daniel*, in his Viſion, *ſaw one*

one like the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven; Dan. 7. 13, 14. St. *Matthew* mentions *his coming in the Glory of his Father, with his holy Angels*; Matth. 25. 31. Christ himself said to his Disciples more than once, *I go away, and come again to you*: and 'twas often in their mouths, *He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry*; Heb. 10. 37. *David* propheſied of him, that he should *make the Clouds his Chariot, and come flying upon the Wings of the Wind*; Psal. 104. 3. Accordingly the Angels told the Men of *Galilee*, That *the same Jesus whom they saw taken up in a Cloud to Heaven, should come again in like manner, as they had seen him taken up*; Acts 1. 11. All which places, and many more that might be cited to that purpose, evidently prove his second Coming. From whence I proceed,

Secondly, To the Signs and Tokens that shall go before it, and usher it in; for before Christ's actual appearing, he will give the drousy World warning by many fearful Signs and Wonders. So the first Words of the Gospel tell us: *There shall be Signs in the Sun, and in the Moon, and in the Stars; and on the Earth, Distress of Nations*, &c. Where the Signs that will presage this great and terrible Day, will be partly in the Heavens, and partly in the Earth: So the Prophecy of *Joel* foretold, *Chap.* 2. 30, 31. *I will shew Wonders in the Heavens, and in the Earth Blood and Fire, and Pillars of Smoak; the Sun shall be turn'd into Darkness, and the Moon into Blood.* To fulfil which Prophecy, Christ himself declares, that before that Day come, *The Sun shall be darkned, and the Moon shall not give its Light, and the Stars of Heaven shall fall, and the Powers of Heaven shall be shaken; and then shall appear the Sign of the Son of Man:* Matth. 24. 29, 30. So that *the Signs in the Sun*, mention'd here by St. *Luke*, will be Eclipses and Darkness; *the Signs in the Moon*, will be likewise Darkness and Blood, and Pillars of Smoak; *the Signs in the Stars*, will be their shooting and falling: and generally *all the Powers of Heaven shall be shaken.* The Signs in the Earth, *will be great Earthquakes in divers Places, and Famines, and Pestilences, and fearful Sights.* In the *Sea*, there will be *the Roaring of Waves*, and a fearful Noise of tumbling Waters: *upon the Earth*, there will be *Distress of Nations, with great Perplexity, Mens Hearts failing them for Fear, and for looking after those things that are coming upon the Earth.* Now all,

or

or moſt of theſe Signs went before, and preſaged the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* which ſoon follow'd after, and were fulfilled in it. So the Words in the cloſe of this Goſpel teſtify; *Verily, I ſay unto you, this Generation ſhall not paſs away till all be fulfilled:* meaning, that all thoſe ſaid Symptoms ſhould be accompliſh'd in the ſpeedy and fatal Overthrow of that City; which is ſo ſure and inevitable, that *Heaven and Earth ſhall ſooner paſs away*, than the Words ſpoken of it fail or paſs away unfulfilled. But tho thoſe portentous Signs and Wonders were literally ſpoken, and immediately fulfill'd in the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*; yet did they look farther, and were ſo many Typical Repreſentations of the general Judgment, and prefigur'd the Coming of that great and terrible Day of the Lord: for ſo the next Words tell us, *And then ſhall they ſee the Son of Man coming in a Cloud with Power and great Glory*; that is, when thoſe fearful Symptoms ſhall appear upon the Face of the Univerſe, then ſhall the Son of God appear in his Glory, to ſummon all the Inhabitants of the Earth to come before him, to hear and receive their everlaſting Doom. But tho this will be a terrible Day indeed to the Wicked, who have diſobey'd and deſpis'd him; tho the Sinners in *Zion* may be juſtly afraid, and Fearfulneſs may ſurprize the Hypocrite, yet will it be a joyful Day to the Righteous, and to all ſuch as have look'd and prepar'd for his Coming: For ſo the following Words declare, *And when theſe things begin to come to paſs, then look up and lift up your Heads; for your Redemption draweth nigh.* Comfortable words indeed, and ſound forth nothing but Joy and Bleſſedneſs! Tho you are now caſt down, and hang down your Heads with Sorrow under the Troubles of this Life, yet then you will be bid to look up, and to lift up your Heads with chearfulneſs, for your Redemption draweth nigh: your Freedom from the Captivity of Sin and Satan, and the Time of inſtating you into the glorious Liberty and Privileges of the Sons of God, will then be at hand. And to confirm you in the Belief and Hopes hereof, he illuſtrates it in the following Verſes by a Parable; for 'tis ſaid, *He ſpake to them a Parable, Behold the Fig-Tree and all other Trees, when they now ſhoot forth, ye ſee and know of your own ſelves, that Summer is now nigh at hand: So likewiſe ye, when ye ſee theſe things come to paſs, know ye that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand.* If the Fruits of Righteouſneſs appear, conclude that the Winter of Affliction is over, and the Summer

mer or Sunshine of Prosperity draweth near. Thus we see both the Certainty, and likewise the Signs and Symptoms of Christ's Second Coming. From whence I proceed,

Thirdly, To consider the Manner and Circumstances of his Coming: And that we are here told will be *with Power and great Glory*. His first Appearance was mean, and in a Dress of Humility and Poverty, because he then came to suffer, and by his Death to purchase a Kingdom for us: But his next Appearance will be glorious, and attended with Pomp and Magnificence; because he then comes to instate us in it, and to take us to reign with him for ever in Glory. And here the

1st Thing to be observ'd, is, the Place from whence he is to come; and that is, from Heaven, the Seat of his Residence, *till the time of the Restitution of all Things*, Acts 3. 21. When the Son of God had finish'd the Work which his Father gave him to do upon Earth, he did in a visible and triumphant manner ascend up into Heaven; where, as a Reward of his Sufferings, his human Nature was exalted to the high Honour of the Right Hand of God, there to sit and reign with him, till the last and great Day of the Consummation of all things; at which time he will rise from his Imperial Throne in Heaven, and descend again upon Earth, to visit these lower Regions. So the Apostle tells us, *He will descend from Heaven with a Shout*, 1 Thess. 4. 16. And elsewhere, *He shall be reveal'd from Heaven with his mighty Angels*, 2 Thess. 1. 17.

2dly, But how will Christ descend from thence? Why that, this Gospel here tells us; ye shall see the Son of Man *coming in a Cloud*, with Power and great Glory. A Cloud was a Vehicle to carry him up, and a Cloud will be the Chariot to bring him down. So the Angel told the Men of *Galilee* in that forecited place, *This same Jesus which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into Heaven*; that is, as a Cloud receiv'd him out of sight, so a Cloud shall bring him into sight again. So we read in St. *Matthew*, Chap. 26. 64. *Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the Right Hand of Power, and coming in the Clouds of Heaven*. *Daniel* foresaw and foretold this, that the Son of Man shall come in the Clouds of Heaven, *Dan.* 7. 13. From this Prophecy the *Jews* generally expect the Coming of the Messias in this manner: And for this reason they reject Christ

and

and ſay the Meſſias is not yet come, becauſe they never ſaw him coming in the Clouds of Heaven; by an unhappy Miſtake applying that to the Firſt, which is meant only of his Second Coming. His firſt Coming was to be through a Virgin's Womb, as the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament plainly declare; ſo that his coming in the Clouds of Heaven, can be meant only of his Second Coming: and ſo 'tis always underſtood in the New Teſtament. But,

3*dly*, What is that *Power and great Glory*, in which 'tis ſaid he will come? By the Power, is meant that univerſal Empire and Dominion he ſhall exerciſe over all Creatures; for all Power will be his both in Heaven and Earth, by which he will command the whole Heavenly Hoſt, and all things on Earth ſhall obey and be ſubject to him. In this Plenitude of Power will his Coming be. As for his Glory, that will out-ſhine the Sun, and darken all the Lights of Heaven with his ſurpaſſing Brightneſs. We read, that at his Transfiguration on Mount *Tabor*, he dazzled the Eyes of his Diſciples with the Splendor of his Preſence; for *his Face ſhined as the Sun, and his Garments were white as the Light*, Matth. 17. 2. But this was but a faint Light to that exceeding Luſtre he will appear in at his Second Coming, when his Eyes will ſparkle with Beams of Majeſty, and his Face ſhine with a far more dazzling Glory: for 'tis ſaid, he will come in *the Glory of his Father*; by which is meant, that *Shechinah*, or flaming Fire, in which he appear'd on Mount *Sinai* at the Delivery of the Law, call'd there *the Glory of the Lord*; which was ſo bright and illuſtrious, that neither *Moſes* nor the People were able to bear it: and yet this will be far more glorious, as deſign'd to adorn a far more glorious Solemnity. But,

4*thly*, With what Retinue or Equipage will he come? Why, this Chriſt himſelf tells us, *Luke* 9. 28. that he *ſhall come in his own Glory, and in his Father's, and of the Holy Angels*. *Daniel*'s Prophecy was, that *a thouſand thouſand ſhould miniſter unto him, and ten thouſand times ten thouſand ſhould ſtand before him*; Dan. 7. 10. This in the New Teſtament is call'd an *innumerable Company of Angels*, Heb. 12. 22. All which are to attend him in this Progreſs; for ſo we read, that *he ſhall come in his Glory, and all his holy Angels with him*, Matth. 25. 31. And St. *Paul* tells us, that *he ſhall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels*, 2 Theſſ. 1. 7. And this their coming with him ſhall not be (as a learned Divine tells us) only for Show and Pomp,

but

but as the Scriptures declare, they shall minister to him in that great Transaction; for these, with an Arch-Angel in the Head of them, shall sound a Trumpet, and thereby awaken all that sleep in the Grave to arise and come before him. So St. *Paul* acquaints us, 1 *Thess.* 4. 16. that *the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a Shout, with the Voice of the Arch-Angel, and the Trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.* Our Saviour himself tells us, *Matth.* 24. 31. that at his coming on the Clouds of Heaven, *He will send his Angels with a great Sound of a Trumpet, and they shall gather his Elect from the four Winds, from one end of the Heavens to the other.*

But where, or to what Place will this his Second Coming be? Why that, as the Scripture hath reveal'd it to us, will be *in the Air*; where he will fix his Throne to be visible to all the Inhabitants of the Earth, who shall be carry'd up by the Angels into the Clouds to him: for so we read, that when Christ shall descend from Heaven with a Shout, with the Voice of the Arch-Angel and the Trump of God, *then they that are alive and remain, shall be caught up in the Clouds, together with them that shall be then raised from the Dead, to meet the Lord in the Air*; 1 Thess. 4. 16, 17. There will he fix his Seat, to manifest his Victory over the Devil, who is stiled *the Prince of the Power of the Air*; and likewise over *all his Angels, Principalities, and Powers*, who have there domineer'd and tyranniz'd over this wretched World. Thus I have briefly shew'd you (as far as the Holy Scriptures direct) the Manner and Circumstances of Christ's Second Coming. It remains that I proceed, in the last place, to consider,

Fourthly, The Great End and Design of it. And that is, to judg the World, and all in it, according to their Works. His first Coming was to purchase and procure Salvation, and to make Offers and Tenders of it unto all Mankind; his second Coming will be to enquire into their Acceptance or Refusal of this Salvation, and to sentence them accordingly. They who have accepted and performed the Terms of it, shall be made joyful Partakers of this Salvation, and be crown'd with everlasting Life; they who have neglected or rejected the Conditions of it, shall be for ever depriv'd of it, and doom'd to everlasting Death.

That

That there will be ſuch a Day of General Judgment, when all Men ſhall be ſummon'd to appear before this Tribunal, the Holy Scripture is every where full and expreſs: *'Tis appointed to all Men once to die*, (ſaith the Apoſtle) *and after that to come to Judgment*, Heb. 9. 27. Where Judgment is made as certain as Death, both being ſettled by a divine and irreverſible Decree; only with this difference, we ſhall die but once, but ſhall be judged to Eternity. That Chriſt ſhall come at the laſt Day to be the Judg, is no leſs clearly ſettled and reveal'd; for God *hath appointed a Day in which he will judg the World in Righteouſneſs, by that Man whom he hath ordained*; that is, by the Man Chriſt Jeſus, *of which he hath given Aſſurance by raiſing him from the Dead*, Acts 17. 31. *The Father judgeth no Man, but hath committed all Judgment to the Son*; John 5. 22. So that *we muſt all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Chriſt, to receive according to the things done in the Body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil*; 2 Cor. 5. 10.

The things for which Chriſt will judg us at that time, will be all that hath been done by us; and ſo our Thoughts, Words, and Actions will come under the Scrutiny and Examination of that Day. And likewiſe all things that have been intruſted with us, and ſo all the Talents of Time, Health, Wealth, Wiſdom, Honour, Power, and the like, will be then reckon'd for, according to the Meaſure and Proportion of them that we have receiv'd.

The Rule by which he will then judg us, will be the Goſpel: So Chriſt himſelf tells us, *The Words that I have ſpoken unto you, the ſame ſhall judg you at the laſt Day*; John 12. 48. And St. *Paul* declares the ſame, *In that day God ſhall judg the Secrets of Mens Hearts by Jeſus Chriſt, according to the Goſpel*; Rom. 2. 16. And the Reſult of all will be, that every one, upon a fair hearing or trial, ſhall receive his Sentence according to his Works; *they that have done Good*, ſhall receive the bleſſed Sentence of *Eternal Life*, and *they that have done Evil*, ſhall hear the black Sentence *of Damnation*; as we read, *John* 5. 29. Thus we ſee the Certainty, the Manner, and the End of Chriſt's ſecond Coming. From all which, I ſhall briefly infer theſe three or four Leſſons.

And, *1ſt*, from the Certainty of his coming again to Judgment, we may learn to fit and prepare our ſelves for it, leſt that Day come upon us unawares, and find us unprepar'd: let us not, with the fooliſh Virgins, be unpro-

vided

vided with *Oil in our Lamps*; that is, with Grace in our Hearts, when the Bridegroom cometh; or say with the careless Servant, *My Lord delayeth his coming*: much less ask with the Scoffers, *Where is the Promise of his coming?* But rather, let us make ready to meet him; and since we know and look for these things, say with the Apostle, *What manner of Men ought we to be, in all holy Conversation and Godliness?*

2*dly*, From Christ's being the Judg, let all good Christians look up and lift up their Heads, for their Redemption draweth nigh. He who was their Redeemer, and lov'd them so well as to die for them, will sure be their merciful Judg, and stand by them at that last and great Hour.

3*dly*, Christ's coming to judg the World, speaks nothing but Dread and Terror to all wicked and ungodly Men; for what can they look for from him, whom they have all their Life-time despis'd and trod under foot, but *a fearful Expectation of Wrath, and the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God?* How can they hope to be sav'd by his Blood, which they have all along slighted, and counted as an unholy thing? In a word, how can they think to *escape*, who have *neglected* and contemned *so great Salvation?*

4*thly*, From the approaching of a future Judgment, we may learn to solve all the Riddles of Providence, concerning the Prosperity of the Wicked, and the Adversities of good Men; for there is a time coming, when these things shall be set right, at which time afflicted Vertue shall be crown'd with Glory, and prosperous Wickedness be cloth'd with endless Shame and Confusion of Face.

Lastly, If Christ be coming again to judg the World, then let us *judg nothing before the Time, until the Lord come.* To judg or censure our Brother, is to forestal the Day of Judgment, and to usurp our Saviour's Office; and therefore the Apostle might well ask such bold Censurers, *Who art thou that judgest another's Servant? to his own Master he stands or falls.* If we will needs be judging, let us judg and condemn our selves now, that we may not be judged, but acquitted at the last Day.

DISCOURSE V.

The EPISTLE for the Third Sunday in *Advent*.

1 Cor. iv. 1——6.

Let a Man ſo account of us, as of the Miniſters of Chriſt, and Stewards of the Myſteries of God. Moreover, it is requir'd in Stewards, that a Man be found faithful; but with me it is a very ſmall thing, that I ſhould be judg'd of you, or of Man's Judgment, &c.

THE Collect for this Day, minds us of Chriſt's firſt Coming in the Fleſh; and likewiſe of his ſecond Coming to Judgment: of both which I have before treated. That which is here added, is, that there was a Meſſenger to prepare his way for the one; and that there are Miniſters and Stewards ſtill to make ready his way for the other: together with a Prayer, that as the former faithfully diſcharg'd his Office at his firſt Coming, ſo the latter may do theirs at his ſecond; that when that time comes, we may be found an acceptable People in his ſight.

Who that firſt Meſſenger was, and who the Miniſters and Stewards now are, and how they are to do their Office in preparing the way of the Lord, is the Matter now to be conſider'd.

The Epiſtle for the Day gives us ſome account of the latter, and the Goſpel of the former; both which are therefore to be conſider'd.

And Firſt, The Epiſtle for the Day, of which I am now to ſpeak, acquaints us with the Miniſters and Stewards, that are to make ready the way for Chriſt's ſecond Coming. And it begins thus; *Let a Man ſo account of us, as of the Miniſters of Chriſt, and Stewards of the Myſteries of God. Moreover, it is requir'd in Stewards, that a Man be found faithful.* Where we may obſerve,

Firſt,

Firſt, The Office and Dignity of the Clergy, imply'd in the Titles of the *Miniſters of Chriſt, and Stewards of the Myſteries of God.*

Secondly, The People's Duty towards them, which is, *ſo to account of them.*

Thirdly, The Miniſters Duty, which is to be found faithful. The following part of the Epiſtle infers from hence theſe three Things:

I. The Proneneſs of ſome Men to judg and cenſure the Miniſters of Chriſt; for St. *Paul* here mentions the *Corinthians judging* of him.

II. The little regard that is to be had of ſuch Cenſures: ſo he here tells them, *With me it is a very ſmall thing to be judged of you, or of Man's Judgment.*

III. A Caution or Counſel againſt all ſuch raſh and unjuſt Judgment; *Therefore judg nothing before the time, until the Lord come*, &c.

Theſe are the principal Things contain'd in this Epiſtle; of which particularly. And

Firſt, of the Office and Dignity of the Clergy, imply'd in the two Titles of the Miniſters of Chriſt, and Stewards of the Myſteries of God.

The 1*ſt* Great Title here given to them, is that of the *Miniſters of Chriſt*; and that becauſe they are ordain'd by Chriſt, and derive their Authority and Commiſſion from him. And as they who are intruſted with any Power under a King, are ſtil'd the King's Miniſters, ſo they who are appointed by Chriſt to inſtruct and govern his Church under him, are properly call'd *Chriſt's Miniſters.* And that they are thus commiſſion'd by him, the Holy Scriptures plainly declare: for after his Reſurrection he appear'd to the Apoſtles, and breathing on them the Holy Ghoſt, ſaid unto them, *As my Father hath ſent me, ſo ſend I you*, John 20. 21, 22. And likewiſe gave them Authority to *ordain others* to ſucceed them, promiſing to *be with them to the end of the World*, Mat. 28. Thus Chriſt by a Succeſſion of Biſhops and Paſtors ſettled in the Church by his own Authority, ſtill continues to teach and rule it to this Day; and all they that can thus derive their Commiſſion by a due and regular Ordination from thoſe Hands, are truly and properly ſaid to be the Miniſters of Chriſt.

The other Title here given to them, is, *the Stewards of the Myſteries of God.* By the *Myſteries of God*, we are to underſtand the great Truths of the Goſpel, or the Revelation of the Way and Means contriv'd by the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God for Man's Salvation; which for the Excellency, Weight, and ſeeming Difficulty of them, are often call'd by the Name of Myſteries. Thus the Incarnation of Chriſt, the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the Reſurrection of the Dead, and the like, are rank'd among the Myſteries of God, 1 *Tim.* 3. 16. & *Col.* 2. 2. To be Stewards of theſe Myſteries of God, is to be authoriz'd by him to preach and publiſh theſe great Truths unto the People, to diſpenſe the Riches of Divine Grace reveal'd in the Goſpel, and as Stewards in God's Houſe to give to every one their Portion in due ſeaſon. So St. *Paul* tells us, that *God hath given to us the Miniſtry of Reconciliation, and committed to us the Word of Peace, making us Ambaſſadors for Chriſt, to beſeech Men in his ſtead to be reconcil'd unto God*; 2 Cor. 5. 18, 19. Now all ſuch as are lawfully call'd to, and intruſted with theſe things, are truly the Miniſters of Chriſt, and Stewards of the Myſteries of God. Both which ſhew us the Honour and Dignity of the Sacred Function: for the Honour of any Service proceeds partly from the Greatneſs of the Maſter, and partly from the Goodneſs of the Work about which we are employ'd. Now to ſerve Chriſt, is to ſerve a higher and better Maſter than all the Princes or Potentates in the World; and to be a Steward in his Houſe, to diſpenſe his Favours, is by far the nobleſt Employment upon Earth, and comes neareſt to the Work and Buſineſs of the holy Angels in Heaven: And therefore this double Title renders them worthy of double Honour. And this will lead me,

Secondly, To the People's Duty towards them; which is, ſo to account of them, and to reſpect them accordingly. Let a Man ſo account of us, as of the *Miniſters of Chriſt, and Stewards of the Myſteries of God. Let a Man*, that is, let every Man; ſo the indefinite Expreſſion ſignifies, let all Men ſo account of us. Neither is this ſpoken only by way of Permiſſion, as a matter indifferent, which they may do or let alone; but by way of Command, as a matter of Duty, which they ought or muſt do: All and every Man muſt account of us, as the *Miniſters of Chriſt*, not the Miniſters of the People; and as the *Stewards of God*, not the Servants

Servants of Men. Learned Men have obſerv'd on this place, that the Prieſts or Men in Holy Orders are in Scripture always ſtil'd *the Miniſters of God, the Miniſters of Chriſt, the Miniſters of the New Teſtament, the Miniſters of the Goſpel, the Miniſters of Chriſt's Church, the Stewards of the Houſe and Myſteries of God*, and the like; but never the Miniſters of the People, or Stewards and Servants of Men: which was done to preſerve the Honour and Veneration due to God and his Miniſters. Whereas the ſaying and thinking otherwiſe, hath led many into great Miſtakes, and occaſion'd too great a Contempt of God and his Miniſters; as if the People were their Maſters, and might chuſe whom they pleaſe, and give them what they think fit: which hath brought matters in the Church to great Confuſion. To prevent which, the Apoſtle here requires all Men to account of them as the Miniſters of Chriſt, and Stewards of the Myſteries of God, to keep up the Honour and Eſteem that is due to them: for tho as they ſtand related to God, and are ſent by him, they are properly his Servants and Miniſters, yet with relation to the People, they are their Maſters and Teachers. The Shepherd, we know, is not the Servant, but the Guide and Governour of the Sheep; even ſo, ſpiritual Paſtors are not ſo much the Miniſters, as the Maſters, Leaders, and Overſeers of the Flock committed to their charge: and as ſuch, God hath appointed them their Work, and allotted them their Wages, for he reſerv'd the tenth part of all Men's Subſtance to himſelf, for the Service of the Altar, antecedent to all human Laws about it; of which there had been no need, if Men had paid that due Obedience to the Laws of God as they ought. So that 'tis not common Theft only, but Sacrilege, to rob his Miniſters of it, and will be attended with the worſt and heavieſt of Curſes.

I have ſpoken the more of this, to rectify a common Error and Abuſe of this Matter, and to convince Men of the Divine Right both of the Miniſtry and its Maintenance. From whence I proceed,

Thirdly, From the People's Duty, to the Miniſters Duty to them; and that is, Fidelity in the diſcharge of their Office: *Moreover, it is requir'd in Stewards, that a Man be found faithful.* This Charge was given to them, Acts 20. 28. *Take heed unto your ſelves, and to the Flock of Chriſt, over which the Holy Ghoſt hath made you Overſeers, to feed*

the Church of God, which he hath purchas'd with his own Blood. This is the great End and Buſineſs of their Miniſtry, to which they will do well to take heed, that they may anſwer it with Joy to the great Shepherd and Biſhop of their Souls and receive the Reward of ſo doing. As *Miniſters of Chriſt*, they are to feed the Flock with ſound Doctrine, and go before them by a pious Example. As *Stewards of the Myſteries of God*, they are to deal out the Bread of Life, and give every one their Meat in due ſeaſon; adminiſtring Milk to Babes, and ſtronger Meats to well-grown Chriſtians, that they may be able to give a good account of their Stewardſhip, and be admitted into their Maſter's Joy. More particularly, they are to prepare the People for the ſecond Coming of their Lord to Judgment, by turning the Hearts of the Diſobedient to the Wiſdom of the Juſt, that they may be found an acccptable People in the ſight of God at that laſt and great Day.

This is the Firſt Part of this Epiſtle for the Day, which concerns our Preparation for the great and final Judgment of God, ſhewing how both Miniſters and People may and ought daily to expect and make ready for it.

The Second Part concerns the raſh Judgment and Cenſures of Men here in this Life; ſhewing, how we may endeavour either wiſely to eſcape, or patiently to bear Man's Judgment at preſent, in hopes of being clear'd and juſtify'd in the future Judgment of God. And here we may obſerve,

I. The too great Proneneſs of ſome Men to judg and cenſure the Miniſters of Chriſt. The great Apoſtle St. *Paul* found and felt ſomething of this, intimating to us, that he was judg'd by theſe *Corinthians*, and was fallen under Man's Judgment; for he declares in the next Verſe, *To me it is a very ſmall thing to be judg'd of you, or of Man's Judgment*; implying, that ſo he was, and that the Tongue of Slander and Cenſure was let looſe upon him: which made him ſay, that he went *thro good Report and bad Report*; for with ſome he was a *Deceiver*, and with others *true*, 2 Cor. 6. 8. He found that both his Perſon and Miniſtry were fallen into Contempt with the *Corinthians*, by the cunning Arts of falſe and corrupt Teachers, that were crept in among them: And among other *Perils* that environ'd him, he tells us, he was *in Perils by falſe Brethren*, who

who ſought falſely to accuſe and condemn him. Neither was it much better with him among the *Galatians*, where he found ſome *his Enemies*, merely for *telling them the truth*. And if ſo eminent a Saint and Apoſtle as St. *Paul* could not eſcape the Laſh of Cenſure, no wonder if inferiour Perſons have their ſhare in it. Yea, we find our Saviour himſelf ſuffering under the private and publick Judgment of wicked Men: for he was cenſur'd for *a Glutton, a Wine-bibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners*; and after accus'd, condemn'd, and crucify'd by them. Now the Diſciple is not above his Lord; and if they thus traduc'd the Lord of Glory, we may well enough think, they will not ſpare his Miniſters. Thus we ſee the Proneneſs of ſome Men to judg and cenſure their Betters: and this proceeds either from Pride, which ſeeks to blacken others, to make their own Reputation ſhine the brighter; or from Envy, which cannot bear the Luſtre of others Merits; or Intereſt, which prompts Men to build their own Fortunes upon the Ruin of their Neighbours.

But what was St. *Paul*'s Opinion or Carriage under their hard Cenſures? Why the Anſwer to that will lead me to the

Next Thing to be obſerv'd, which was the little regard that is to be ſhew'd to all ſuch Reproaches and Cenſures: *With me* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *it is a ſmall thing to be judg'd of you, or of Man's Judgment.* 'Tis a thing of very ſmall moment or conſequence, yea, even a matter of nothing; for they having no Power or Right of judging, their Sentence muſt be vain and frivolous: And ſo St. *Paul* here reckon'd it, intimating to them, that tho he, as a Miniſter of Chriſt, and Steward of holy Myſteries, might in ſomething fail of his Duty, and ſo deſerve blame; yet he was not to be judg'd of them, or of Men, that had no Authority for ſo doing: no, ſaith he, nor yet by my own ſelf I judg not what degree of Honour or Blame I may be worthy of, but leave that to him who judgeth righteouſly; *for I know nothing by my ſelf* (ſaith he) *yet am I not thereby juſtify'd*; i. e. Tho I cannot charge my ſelf with any great fault in the execution of my Office, yet is not this the clearing or juſtifying of me: Only God, that ſeeth and knoweth all things, muſt do that; for *he that judgeth me is the Lord*, none elſe have any Authority or Ability to do it; and therefore, ſaith he, I have little reaſon to value

Mens Judgment, how candid or cruel ſoever it may be, ſince for want of Authority it is utterly void and invalid of it ſelf. By which the Apoſtle teaches us, not to fear or regard the raſh Cenſures or Sentence of the World; but having the Teſtimony of a good Conſcience, to make light of the ſiniſter Judgment and Conſtructions of Men. Calumnies and Accuſations deſpis'd, often vaniſh and die away; whereas they are commonly kept alive, and ſting too by Reſentment: for Reproaches only ſtick and wound the guilty Breaſt, but fly off and leave no Impreſſion upon a vertuous Mind; which ſhould teach us to make no account of the Cenſures of others, nor to be too free of our own. And this will lead me,

Laſtly, To the Caution or Counſel given in the Cloſe of this Epiſtle, *Therefore judg nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of Darkneſs, and will make manifeſt the Counſels of the Heart; and then ſhall every Man have praiſe of God.*

Judg nothing, for all Judgment is God's, and none elſe can have any right of judging without him: *He is the Judg of all the Earth*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *Pſal.* 94. 2. He made all Men, and ſo hath the ſole Right of judging them, and none may preſume to judg his Creatures; which made the Apoſtle ask the Queſtion, *Who art thou that judgeſt another's Servant? To his own Maſter he ſtandeth or falleth*; Rom. 14. 4. Again,

Judg nothing, neither Mens Thoughts, which are out of our reach; nor Mens Words or Actions, which fall not under our Judgment, any otherwiſe than to think, and ſpeak, and hope the beſt, and to make the faireſt and mildeſt Conſtruction of them: much leſs are we to judg of their final State and Condition, which is to be determin'd by God only. Furthermore, judg nothing *before the time*, becauſe *God hath appointed a Day, wherein he will judg the World in Righteouſneſs*; and for any to do it before, is to take God's Work out of his hand, and to foreſtal the Day of Judgment, which is to be left to him, and to be put off *until the Lord come*. But yet this doth not condemn the Office of a Judg, even in this World, or render earthly Magiſtrates either unneceſſary or unlawful; for theſe are appointed by God, and act by his Command and Authority: They are God's Miniſters and Vicegerents upon Earth to determine Mens Rights, and decide their Controverſies,

troverſies, while they remain here, and thereby preſerve the Peace and Order of the World: They meddle not with Mens future and final State, which is not in their Commiſſion, but leave that till the Lord come, to be determin'd by his final Sentence at the laſt Day, when he will judg all Men over again, and render to them according to their Works. Then will he *bring to light all the hidden things of Darkneſs*, which are not to be known or diſcover'd here, and *make manifeſt the ſecret Counſels of the Heart*, which are now remov'd from all human Cognizance; *and then ſhall every Man have Praiſe of God.* Not that all Men ſhall be then juſtify'd and commended, but every one that hath done well ſhall have their due Recompence of Reward, and they that have done evil ſhall receive their juſt Puniſhment.

This is briefly the Senſe and Sum of this Day's Epiſtle. From whence we may learn,

1. Who are the Officers appointed to make ready the way for Chriſt's coming to Judgment; namely, the Miniſters and Stewards of Holy Myſteries, who are therefore to be receiv'd and reſpected accordingly. We are here bid ſo to account of them as of the Miniſters of Chriſt, and Stewards of the Myſteries of God; and ſo to think them worthy of double Honour, as well for his ſake to whom they belong, as for the Work's ſake about which they are employ'd. Their Calling is the higheſt upon Earth, their Employment the nobleſt, and their Meſſage the moſt honourable; they are the Ambaſſadors of Chriſt, ſent to treat with Men about their everlaſting Peace and Salvation. And as a Prince reckons himſelf honour'd or affronted in the good or bad Uſage of his Ambaſſadors, ſo Chriſt accounts himſelf reſpected or deſpis'd in the well or ill Treatment of his Miniſters: and therefore the Apoſtle gives a ſtrict Charge to all People, to *know them that are over them in the Lord, and admoniſh them, and to eſteem them very highly in love for their Work's ſake*; 1 Theſſ. 5. 13. And the Author to the *Hebrews* exhorts to *obey them that have the Rule over them in the Lord, and ſubmit themſelves, for they watch for their Souls, as thoſe that muſt give account, that they may do it with Joy, and not with Grief:* Heb. 13. 17.

2. If Chriſt's Miniſters are to make the way ready for his ſecond Coming, then we may learn hence to hearken

to

to them, and receive their Meſſage: the Words they deliver are from God, and therefore to be receiv'd with all Reverence and Veneration, and to be counted worthy of all Acceptation. As the Miniſters and Stewards of God's Houſe are to be faithful in delivering their Maſter's Will, ſo are the People to be careful of receiving and obſerving it: *He that heareth you* (ſaith Chriſt) *heareth me; and he that deſpiſeth you, deſpiſeth me; and he that deſpiſeth me, deſpiſeth him that ſent me:* Luke 10. 16. And dreadful will be the Doom of all ſuch, as ſhall be found Deſpiſers of God, and of Chriſt, and of his Holy Miniſters.

3. From Chriſt's Coming to Judgment, we may learn what little regard is to be given to the Judgment or Cenſures of Men. *To me it is a very ſmall matter* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *to be judg'd of you, or of Man's Judgment.* He laid no manner of ſtreſs upon it; for Man's Judgment is many times raſh and inconſiderate, either blinded with Paſſion, or biaſs'd by Pride, Prejudice, Partiality, and Self-Intereſt; yea, the Apoſtle tells us, that he could not truſt his own Judgment: *I judg not mine own ſelf,* ſaith he. For tho he could not charge himſelf with any Unfaithfulneſs, but was arm'd with a Conſcience of his own Integrity, yet God was greater than his Conſcience, and knoweth all things; and therefore none but he was able either to juſtify or condemn him: and for Men to take upon them to do either, is preſumptuous and vain. Wherefore,

Laſtly, From what hath been ſaid, let us judg nothing before the time; let us not venture to judg any Perſon, or caſt out the Bolt of hard Speeches or Cenſures againſt any; for who made thee a Judg, may be ask'd in all ſuch Caſes? but rather let us refer all to the final, juſt, and impartial Judgment of God, who being their Maker and Preſerver, will do all Men right.

DIS-

DISCOURSE VI.

The GOSPEL for the Third Sunday in *Advent.*

Mat. xi. 2——11.

Now when John *had heard in Prison the Works of Christ, he sent two of his Disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?* &c. to those words, *This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my Messenger before thy Face, and he shall prepare thy way before thee.*

THE Epistle for this Day, of which I have spoken, shews us the Ministers or Stewards, that are to make ready the way for Christ's second Coming. The Gospel for the Day, of which I am now to speak, shews us the Messenger that prepar'd the way for his first Coming, and that was *John the Baptist*, of whom 'tis said, in the Close of this Gospel, *This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my Messenger before thy Face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.* Now because 'twas principally for these Words that this Gospel was appointed to be read on this Day, I shall briefly consider what goes before, and then chiefly insist on them, as the proper Subject for this Day's Meditation.

But before I enter upon either, it may be here ask'd, How it was consistent with that great Humility, in which Christ's first Coming is describ'd, to have a Harbinger or Forerunner to go before to prepare for his Reception, which is wont to be a great piece of the Pomp and Gallantry of Princes? In answer to this, if we consider who this Harbinger was, together with the despicable Garb and Equipage in which he came, there could be little reason to expect any thing of Pomp or State to be coming after. The Person imploy'd herein was *John the Baptist*, one train'd up under the austere Discipline and Contempt of the World,

World, and was accordingly dreſs'd up in all the Circumſtances of outward Meanneſs and Poverty.

The Place where he appear'd, was not in any Prince's Palace or populous City, but in a ſolitary Deſart, *the Wilderneſs of* Judea; where he led the moſt ſtrict and retir'd Life of an Anchoret. His Apparel was not any of that gorgeous Attire that is found in King's Houſes, but only *Camel's Hair tied with a leathern Girdle about his Loins*, the uſual Garb of a Hermite or Recluſe. His Diet was ſuitable to all the reſt, which was not any of the coſtly Dainties or Delicacies of a Court; but *Locuſt and wild Hony*, the meaneſt of all Food; which he receiv'd juſt as Nature afforded it, without uſing any of the elaborate Arts to prepare or dreſs it. Such a mean Harbinger might well enough become ſuch an humble Saviour, who came to take off Mens Hearts from this World, to mind and fit them for a better.

Now this Harbinger was, as the beginning of the Goſpel tells us, caſt into Priſon by *Herod* for his ſharp rebuking of him, for keeping *Herodias*, his Brother *Philip*'s Wife. And being thus in Priſon, and in danger of being put to death, as he afterward was by the Subtilty of *Herodias* and her Daughter; St. *John hearing there the Works of Chriſt, ſent two of his Diſciples, and ſaid unto him, Art thou he that ſhould come, or do we look for another?* Which Queſtion could not proceed from any doubt or diſtruſt of St. *John* in the Truth of his Meſſiahſhip, for he was both his Harbinger to prepare for him, and his Herald to proclaim him; *He ſaw and bare record, that he was the Son of God*, John 1. 34. And ver. 29. he uſher'd him into the World, and with his Finger pointing at him, ſaid, *Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the Sins of the World!* So that he ſent them with this Queſtion, not for himſelf, who was fully aſſur'd of the Truth of it, but for the ſake of his Diſciples: for fearing that their Faith might be ſhaken by his Death, and they being to preach and publiſh him, when he was gone, he ſent them to him to be confirm'd in the Faith by Arguments from his own Mouth, that they might the better adhere and cleave faſt to him. To which end, he bids them *go and ſhew* John *again what things ye hear and ſee; the Blind receive their Sight, and the Lame walk, the Lepers are cleans'd, and the Deaf hear, the Dead are rais'd up, and the Poor have the Goſpel preach'd to them.* All which things he did in their preſence for their greater Satisfaction, referring

referring them to the Prophecies of the Old Testament, where these things were promis'd to be done by the Messias at his Coming. So the Prophet *Isaiah* foretold, Chap. 35. 4, 5, 6. *Behold, your God will come and save you! then the Eyes of the Blind shall be open'd, and the Ears of the Deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the Lame leap as an Hart, and the Tongue of the Dumb shall sing, for in the Wilderness shall the Waters break out, and Streams in the Desart.* And Chap. 61. 1. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach glad Tidings to the Meek, he hath sent me to bind up the Broken-hearted, to proclaim Liberty to the Captives, and the opening the Prison to them that are bound, and to proclaim the acceptable Year of the Lord,* &c. Which things they themselves seeing fulfill'd in him and done by him, they might from thence firmly believe and conclude that he was the Person promis'd, or he that should come: adding withal these Words for their Encouragement, *And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.* Where to *be offended* in Christ, is so to spurn and stumble at him, as to take occasion to deny and forsake him; which all that escape, by adhering to him, shall receive all that Blessedness, which by his Merits and Death he hath purchas'd for them.

When our Saviour had said these things to *John*'s Disciples, he dismiss'd them, and they departed from him. After which, knowing how the Multitude had flock'd in great numbers to the Wilderness, he ask'd their Opinion concerning *John*, saying in the following Verses, *What went you out into the Wilderness for to see? a Reed shaken with the Wind?* Did you resort thither to see how the Wind plays with the Reed, and shakes the Boughs in the Wilderness? sure, so many would not be drawn thither upon so trivial and childish an Errand. *But what then went ye out for to see? a Man clothed in soft Rayment?* Was it to see a Person array'd in silken and gorgeous Attire? Why that is more vain than the other, for such rich and costly Apparel is not to be found in the Retirements of a Desart, but in the Resorts of Princes Courts; for *behold! they that wear soft Clothing are in Kings Houses.* He that withdraws into a Wilderness, affects not fine Clothes, or any worldly Splendor, which is not to be seen there; but is content with coarse Habit and coarser Fare, like St. *John* with Camels Hair, and the Food of Bees. Was it then such a Person that *you went out to see?* Did you repair thither to see and hear

hear a *Prophet? Yea*, ſaith Chriſt, *and more than a Prophet.* You went out to *John* as a Prophet, and ſo indeed he was, and a great one too, for all the Prophets propheſy'd of him; yea, he was of a pitch beyond all the other Prophets that went before him, being the Herald and Harbinger of Chriſt: for *this is he, of whom it is written, Behold! I ſend my Meſſenger before thy Face, to prepare thy Way before thee.* And now we are come to that principal Paſſage of this Goſpel, for which it is read, and ought to be conſider'd this Day. In handling whereof, I muſt ſhew,

Firſt, That 'tis written in the Prophets, that ſuch a Meſſenger ſhould go before, and prepare the Way of the Meſſias.

Secondly, That St. *John* was the Perſon, or he of whom this was written.

Thirdly, I muſt ſhew, how or in what manner he prepar'd the Way of the Lord.

Firſt, That there ſhould be ſuch a Meſſ[illegible] or Forerunner of the Meſſias, is written and foretold by ſundry of the Prophets. The Prophet *Iſaiah* ſtiles him, *The Voice of one crying in the Wilderneſs, Prepare ye the Way of the Lord, make ſtrait in the Deſart a Highway for our God; Every Valley ſhall be exalted, and every Mountain and Hill ſhall be made low; and the Crooked ſhall be made ſtrait, and the rough Places plain, and the Glory of the Lord ſhall be reveal'd, and all Fleſh ſhall ſee it together, for the Mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it.* Iſa. 40. 3, 4, 5. Where this Meſſenger is repreſented by a Voice of one proclaiming his Coming, and calling upon the World to make ready for him, by raiſing of Valleys, and levelling Hills, by rectifying of crooked Paths, and plaining of rough Ways, that all his Way may be plain before him. How that was done, we ſhall ſee after.

But the Prophecy of *Malachi*, to which the Words of the Text refer, is yet plainer; for there it is written, *Behold I will ſend my Meſſenger before my Face, and he ſhall prepare the Way before me; and the Lord whom ye ſeek ſhall come ſuddenly to his Temple, even the Meſſenger of the Covenant whom ye delight in: behold, he ſhall come, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.* Mal. 3. 1. By which Prophecies it is evident, that a Meſſenger was to go before, and to bring the World Tidings of a Saviour's Coming.

But

But who was this Messenger? Why that, the most Particular will inform us, 'twas *John the Baptist*; *This is he of whom it is written*, &c. Indeed he was design'd and qualify'd for this Office from the beginning, for he was consecrated and *fill'd with the Holy Ghost, even from his Mother's Womb*; Luke 1. 15. And was ordain'd to *go before the Son of God, in the Spirit and Power of* Elias, *to turn the Hearts of the Fathers unto their Children, and the Disobedient to the Wisdom of the Just, to make ready a People prepar'd for the Lord*; ver. 17. To this end, his Conception, Nativity, and whole Course of Life were extraordinary: his Birth was foretold by an Angel, being beside the common Course of Generation; for his Parents were both past Age, *Elizabeth* barren, and *Zachary* well stricken in Years. The Father for distrusting the Message was struck with Dumbness, partly as a Sign to assure him of the Truth of what was told him, and partly as a Punishment to chastise his Incredulity. When *Elizabeth* was six months gone with child, the Virgin *Mary*, then big with our Saviour, came and saluted her; upon which Salutation, she felt the Babe leaping in her Womb, and said to the Blessed Virgin, *Whence is it that the Mother of our Lord should come unto me? For lo! as soon as the Voice of thy Salutation sounded in my ears, the Babe leaped in my Womb for joy*; ver. 41, 42, 43. Whereby (as one hath observ'd) he seem'd to have some natural sense of his Duty to his Saviour, as soon as he was conceiv'd, and to do part of his Errand before he was born; for his leaping in his Mother's Womb, at the Salutation of *Mary* then newly conceiv'd of our Saviour, seem'd to give very early Tokens of his Joy, and to do homage to the Son of God, when they were yet both unborn. These were some of the Presages and Wonders of his Conception and Birth, which foresignify'd some great and uncommon things to follow after.

When his Infancy was over, and he arriv'd to some measure of Understanding, he left his Father's House, and retir'd into the Solitude of a Wilderness; where he spent his Time in the greatest Abstinence and Devotion, and enjoy'd, as we may imagine, a most free and undisturb'd Intercourse with Heaven: for by thus sequestring himself, he escap'd the Pollutions of the World, being neither corrupted with the Manners, nor distracted with the Cares of human Life; taking his Garments from the Backs of Beasts,

and

and his Food from the natural Care and Labour of the Bees.

Being thus conſecrated from the Womb, and prepar'd by ſo great and almoſt angelical Sanctity, he was honour'd with more clear and ſignal Revelations than any of the Prophets that went before him; and for that reaſon ſaid to be *more than a Prophet:* the other Prophets ſpake of his coming, and were the Meſſengers and Foretellers of him, as he was of Chriſt. *Elias*, who was one of the chiefeſt of the Prophets, was a Type of St. *John*, who was the immediate Precurſor and Proclaimer of our Saviour: And whereas the Prophets before him deliver'd only ſome dark and obſcure Predictions of the Meſſias, he had the honour to uſher him into the World, and with his Finger to point at him, with an *Ecce Agnus Dei! Behold the Lamb of God!*

And what greater Honour could be confer'd on any of the Sons of Men, than to be the Harbinger of the Son of God, and the long-expected Meſſias; and to be as the Morning-Star to this Sun of Righteouſneſs? 'Tis, we know, no ſmall Honour to be the Harbinger of an earthly Prince, to be diſpatch'd before with the joyful News of his Coming; but how much more honourable is it to be the Herald of the King of Kings, to proclaim his Coming; to introduce the Redeemer of Mankind, and to be ſo nearly employ'd about the Arrival of ſo heavenly a Perſon? This Honour we find confer'd here on St. *John*, who was the Voice to proclaim this heavenly Perſon, to prepare for his Coming, and to publiſh the firſt Glad-tidings of the Goſpel. Upon which account Chriſt himſelf ſolemnly declar'd, *Verily, I ſay unto you, that among them that are born of Women, there hath not riſen a greater than* John the Baptiſt.

But how did he prepare the Way of the Lord? that is our laſt Particular: Which is to ſhew the Manner of his making the World ready for him, and that was not with any worldly Pomp or Splendor; not by calling upon the Inhabitants of the Earth, to meet their Lord in State and Magnificence, for he purpoſely declin'd all this: and tho he were the great Light of the World, yet he choſe to enter into it as it were in a Cloud of Obſcurity and Darkneſs. But it was by preaching Repentance, and turning People from their Sins, ſaying, *Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*, Matth. 3. 2. The whole World, at that time, lay in Wickedneſs; Vices had their Temples, and their

Votaries

Votaries too; some serv'd their Gods with all manner of lewd and obscene Rites, others worship'd their drunken Deities with all kinds of Excess and Riot; others again, serv'd the Devil with barbarous and bloody Sacrifices; and generally, a great Corruption of Life and Manners had over-spread the Face of the Earth. Now *John*'s Business was to alarm the World with the near Approach of the Holy Jesus, willing them to prepare to entertain him with holy Hearts and Lives, to break off their Sins by Repentance, and by a serious Amendment and Reformation of their Ways, to dispose themselves for the Glad-tidings of the Gospel; for *the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand:* the long-expected Messias was then coming, and his Kingdom ready to appear, and therefore would have them make ready for him, by abandoning of all Sin, and turning to the Ways of Righteousness, that they might be welcomed and receiv'd by him. He told the *Jews* that the Son of God was come down from Heaven, a Person far beyond him in all respects, and to whom he was not worthy to minister in the meanest Offices; that he would bring in a new and better state of Things, and enlighten the World with clearer Revelations. And then they should see the fulfilling of all the Prophecies in the Person of Christ, and behold the Substance and Reality of all those Types and Shadows that were appointed to foresignify and represent him. He sharply rebuk'd the *Pharisees* and *Sadducees* for their Hypocrisy and Malice; calling them a *Generation of Vipers*, the Spawn or Brood of the old Serpent, and warning them to *flee from the Wrath to come*; and to that end, to *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance*; and not to boast or rely upon their being the Seed of *Abraham*, to whom they were so unlike: for God was able, of the *Gentiles*, to raise up Children to *Abraham*, who should better imitate his Faith, and walk in the Steps of his Obedience. And if they would not take this Warning to repent and amend, *the Ax would be laid to the Root of the Tree*, and utterly root out both them and their Church; for *his Fan was in his Hand*, ready to *purge his Floor, to gather the Wheat*, that is, good Men, *into his Garner; and to burn up the Chaff*, that is, obstinate Sinners, *with unquenchable Fire.* This was St. *John*'s Sermon which he *preach'd in the Wilderness of* Judea, where great Multitudes resorted to see and hear him: which Sermon had that good Success, that *there went out to him* Jerusalem, *and all* Judea, *and all the Region round about*

about Jordan, *and were baptized of him in* Jordan, *confeſſing their Sins*; Matth. 3. 5, 6. But as *John* was the Forerunner of Chriſt, ſo his Baptiſm was but a Prelude or Forerunner of a much higher Baptiſm to be adminiſter'd by him; ſo he himſelf declares, Ver. 11. *I indeed baptize you with Water unto Repentance, but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whoſe Shoes I am not worthy to bear; he ſhall baptize you with the Holy Ghoſt, and with Fire.* While *John* was thus preaching and baptizing in *Jordan*, Jeſus himſelf came *from* Galilee *to* Jordan *to be baptized of him*; which he did partly to honour his Harbinger, and ſhew his Approbation of him in the Diſcharge of his Office, and partly to adorn and recommend his Baptiſm; but chiefly, becauſe it *behov'd him* (as himſelf declares) *to fulfil all Righteouſneſs.* And therefore tho St. *John* modeſtly declin'd it, ſaying, *I have need to be baptized of thee, and comeſt thou to me?* yet Jeſus put this high and holy Office upon him, and was baptized of him; which gave him that honourable Title of *John the Baptiſt.* And when Jeſus was baptiz'd, the Heavens immediately open'd, and he ſaw the Spirit of God deſcending like a Dove, and lighting upon him; and lo! a Voice from Heaven, ſaying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleas'd.* Where what was before proclaim'd by St. *John*, is atteſted and confirm'd by a Voice from Heaven, that he is the Son of God, and Saviour of the World.

Thus I have briefly explain'd the Goſpel for this Day, in all the remarkable Parts and Paſſages of it. All that remains, is to make ſome brief Application of the whole.

And, 1*ſt*, from St. *John*'s ſending his Diſciples to our Saviour to know the Truth of his Meſſiahſhip, we may learn and labour to get the beſt ſatisfaction we can, both to our ſelves and others in that important Point; for that being the main Foundation of the Chriſtian Religion, and of all the Hopes that are built upon it, we ought to be well aſſur'd and eſtabliſh'd in the Belief of it.

2*dly*, From Chriſt's appealing to his Miracles for their ſatisfaction, we may learn, that his Miracles are the beſt Argument and Demonſtration of his Meſſiahſhip, and may abundantly convince us of the Truth of all his Doctrine. *His giving Sight to the Blind*, may help to cure our ſpiritual Blindneſs, and to give us a better Inſight into the Truths of the Goſpel. *His giving Feet to the Lame*, may

may ſerve to make us walk the more readily in the Paths of his Precepts. *His cleanſing the Lepers*, may help to heal the Leproſy of Sin in our Souls. *His making the Deaf to hear, and the Dumb to ſpeak*, may teach us to attend the more diligently to his Word, and to ſpeak of his Praiſe. *His raiſing the Dead to Life again*, may raiſe our Hopes, and quicken our Faith in him. And generally all his Miracles may ſtrengthen our Belief, and make us more firmly adhere to him.

Laſtly, From St. *John*'s preparing the Way of the Lord by the Doctrine of Repentance, we may learn to prepare for the approaching Feſtival the ſame way; that is, to remember and celebrate his coming in the Fleſh, by a hearty Repentance and turning from all our Sins. *This Lamb of God came to take away the Sins of the World*; and therefore we muſt caſt them off, when we remember his Coming. He regards not fine Clothes, but the Garments of Praiſe and the Clothing of Humility; nor are we ſo much to pamper our Bodies with good Chear, as to refreſh our Souls with the heavenly Food of his Body and Blood: And by thus remembring and preparing for his firſt Coming, we ſhall be remember'd and receiv'd by him at his ſecond.

DISCOURSE VII.

The EPISTLE for the Fourth Sunday in *Advent*.

Philip. iv. 4——8.

Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I ſay, Rejoice. Let your Moderation be known unto all Men; the Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by Prayer and Supplication, with Thankſgiving, let your Requeſts be made known unto God, &c.

THIS Day being the Sunday immediately preceding the Nativity of our Lord, calls upon us to expect him with Joy, and to meet him with Exultation. The Collect for the Day prays for the haſtening of his Coming, and teaches us, as Men impatient of Delay, to

ſay, *Raiſe up thy Power, and come among us, and with great Might ſuccour us; that whereas thro our Sins and Wickedneſs we are ſore lett and hinder'd in running the Race that is ſet before us, thy bountiful Grace may ſpeedily help and deliver us.*

The Epiſtle for the Day recommends to us four or five Chriſtian Graces or Vertues, very ſuitable to the near Approach of ſo great a Solemnity: and they are, Joy, Moderation, Truſt, Thankſgiving, and Prayer; to all which is added a gracious Promiſe of a Bleſſing to all that obſerve and practiſe them. Of theſe in their order.

And, *Firſt*, I begin, as the Epiſtle doth, with an Exhortation to Joy; *Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I ſay, Rejoice.* To *rejoice* in general, is to raiſe the Spirits to a pitch of Mirth and Chearfulneſs, expreſs'd by the lively Air and Freedom of the Tongue and Countenance. To *rejoice in the Lord*, is to do this in his Cauſe, at his Call, and for his Sake. To *rejoice in the Lord alway*, is to keep up our Spirits to this pitch, and to be ever in tune and readineſs to ſound forth his Praiſe. And leſt we ſhould let them fall and ſink into Sorrow and Sadneſs, the Exhortation is doubled and repeated; *And again I ſay, Rejoice.* But is this to be done always? Yes, for ſo the Text expreſly tells us: ſpiritual Joy, or a Delight in God and his Service, is never out of ſeaſon; tho worldly Mirth and ſenſual Joy may be and often is unſeaſonable. A merry Heart and a chearful Countenance recommend Religion, whoſe Ways thereby appear to be *Ways of Pleaſantneſs, and all its Paths Peace.* Whereas heavy Hearts, ſour Faces, and dejected Countenances, bring a ſcandal upon the Ways of God, as if they were Enemies to all Mirth, and doom'd Men to an abſurd and perpetual Melancholy. And therefore the Apoſtle here preſſes the *Philippians* to *rejoice in the Lord alway:* and leſt they ſhould forget it at any time, and give way to Sadneſs, he renews and redoubles it upon them, *And again I ſay, Rejoice.* The ſame Advice he gives to the *Theſſalonians*, in the firſt Epiſtle, Chap. 5. 16. *Rejoice evermore*; that is, not only in times of ſignal Mercies and Deliverances, when Men are free and forward enough to rejoice, but likewiſe in times of Affliction and Adverſity, when the Spirits are apt to fail and ſink; then it is that we ſhould endeavour to bear up, and to preſerve a chearful Heart and Mind. And to this the Words of our Text ſeem to refer, where the Apoſtle wills us to rejoice in the Lord always,

always, whatever may befal us; for Afflictions and Perſecutions, which are the worſt that can happen to us in the Service of God, are rather matter of Joy than Grief to us; for they are the Diſcipline of a loving Father, the Marks of his Favour, that tend to the promoting of our preſent Good, and the increaſe of our future Glory. And therefore St. *James* bids us to *count it all Joy, when we fall into divers Temptations*, and rather to *rejoice* than to *faint under Tribulation.*

But we have now a Seaſon approaching, that calls for our greateſt Joy and Rejoicing, *viz.* The Coming of the Son of God from Heaven, to reſcue us from all the Miſeries and Troubles of this preſent Life, and that which is to come. And what Joy can be great enough to ſolemnize his Appearance? Abraham *rejoic'd at this Day, for he ſaw it and was glad*; John 8.56. The Word in the Original ſignifies his leaping and dancing for joy: and if *Abraham*, at ſuch a remote and imperfect proſpect of him, was ſo tranſported with Joy; what Extaſies of Joy ought we to expreſs at his near and actual Appearance? If a promis'd Meſſiah at diſtance was ſuch glad Tidings, how much greater muſt a God manifeſt in the Fleſh be? *Abraham*, *Moſes*, and the Prophets ſaw this Saviour only thro a Glaſs darkly, they beheld him veil'd under obſcure Types and Prophecies; whereas he hath ſhew'd himſelf in theſe latter days with open face, we have liv'd to ſee the fulfilling of all thoſe dark Prophecies, and our Eyes have ſeen that Salvation, which was prepar'd before the face of all People. And if they were ſo affected with Joy at their dark Diſcoveries of him under the Law, how much more tranſported ought we to be, at the brighter Revelations of him under the Goſpel? *Zachary* and *Elizabeth* fell a praiſing of God for bleſſing them with a Son, who was the Forerunner of our Saviour; and after rejoic'd greatly in the Salvation that follow'd in it, ſaying in his *Benedictus*, *Bleſſed be the Lord God of* Iſrael, *for he hath viſited and redeemed his People, and raiſed up a mighty Salvation for them out of the Houſe of his Servant* David, *as he ſpake by the mouth of his holy Prophets, which have been ſince the World began.* Luke 1.68, 69. And the Bleſſed Virgin in her *Magnificat* declares, that *her Soul did magnify the Lord, and her Spirit rejoiced in God her Saviour*, ver. 46. Which great and early Examples have ed us the way, and taught us to follow them, in *rejoicing*

in the Lord alway: And therefore *again I ſay, Rejoice*; the firſt Vertue here recommended to us.

The *Second* is *Moderation*, in the following words; *Let your Moderation be known unto all Men, the Lord is at hand.* And here becauſe this Vertue hath been groſly miſunderſtood and perverted, 'twill be requiſite to ſhew what this *Moderation* is, and how it is to be made *known unto Men*; together with the Reaſon annex'd, becauſe *the Lord is at hand.* For the

1ſt, Moderation in general is a Vertue that conſiſts in the well-governing of the Deſires, Paſſions, and Affections of the Soul, by confining them to their proper Objects, and keeping them within their due bounds and meaſures. But before I explain this Definition to you, I muſt obſerve a new and wrong Notion of Moderation, that hath been lately ſtarted, and too greedily embrac'd in our days. And that is,

Some have taken Moderation for a Lukewarmneſs and Neutrality in Religion. Hence a Want of Zeal for the Church, a Coldneſs and Indifferency about the Orders and Conſtitutions of it, a halting between two Opinions, and trimming between the Church and the Conventicle, being ſometimes of the one and ſometimes of the other, without being conſtant or true to either, frequently paſs under the ſacred Name of Moderation: And they that abate of their Conformity to the Eſtabliſh'd Church, and do their Duty by halves; they that countenance Sects and Diviſions, to diſturb and bring Diſorder and Confuſion in it, too often paſs under the Stile of moderate Men. But this Notion of Moderation and moderate Men is no where mention'd or countenanc'd in Holy Scripture, but is directly contrary to the Rules and Precepts given in it. This ſort of Moderation was ſharply rebuk'd in the Church of *Laodicea*, Rev. 3. 15, 16. *I know thy Works* (ſaith God) *and wiſh thou wert either hot or cold; but ſince thou art neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm, I will ſpue thee out of my mouth.* And indeed, this lukewarm and indifferent Temper is ſo nauſeous to God and Man, that it were not amiſs if ſuch Perſons were ſpu'd out of the Church.

But to paſs from this falſe to the true Notion of Moderation; I ſtile it a Vertue, that conſiſts in the well-governing the Deſires, Paſſions, and Affections of the Soul; and that hath two Branches: The one conſiſts in regulating our bodily

bodily Appetites and Deſires after the good things of this Life: The other conſiſts in the well-governing our Paſſions and Affections, as to the Evils, Afflictions, and Troubles of this World.

The firſt part of Moderation conſiſts in regulating our Appetites and Deſires as to the good things of this Life. Thus to moderate our Appetites in the Uſe of God's Creatures, by keeping the Mean in eating and drinking, without running into Inordinacy or Exceſs, is a good piece of Moderation, and is the ſame with Temperance and Sobriety. Again, the moderating our Deſires after the Riches, Honours, and Pleaſures of this Life, ſo as to take no ill methods in getting, nor to exceed the due Bounds and Meaſures in uſing them; is another excellent piece of Moderation, and is the ſame with Contentment and Chaſtity.

The ſecond part of Moderation conſiſts in the well-governing our Paſſions and Affections, as to the Evils, Afflictions, and Troubles of this Life. Thus to moderate our Grief, ſo as not to faint or ſink under them, nor murmur againſt God for ſending them, nor yet to uſe any ſiniſter or indirect Means to help our ſelves out of them, but to bear up with Courage under them, and to wait God's time and way to be deliver'd from them; is a good part of Chriſtian Moderation, and is the ſame with Meekneſs and Patience, and ſo 'tis frequently underſtood here in the words of the Text.

But there is yet another Notion of Moderation; and that is, to ſignify a Mitigation of the Rigor of ſtrict and exact Juſtice; ſo the word ἐπιεικὲς in the Text often ſignifies: thus mildly to interpret and execute Laws, not dealing with Rigor, but acting by the Rules of Reaſon and Charity; this is often ſtil'd Moderation, and is the ſame with Equity and Gentleneſs, which is made a Property of Divine and Heavenly Wiſdom, *James* 3. 17.

Theſe are the principal Parts or Acts of that *Moderation* which the Apoſtle, in the next place, would have to *be known unto all Men*; that is, not by a vain Affectation of being call'd or thought moderate Men, much leſs by an obſtinate Oppoſition and Diſobedience to Laws and good Orders, the Guiſe and Practice of ſuch as would be thought ſo: for theſe are no ſigns of Modeſty or Moderation, but Marks of an ignorant and intemperate Zeal; and inſtead of making known any Moderation or Meekneſs of Mind,

diſcover only a Peeviſhneſs and Perverſeneſs of Spirit. To make our Moderation known unto all Men, it muſt be by Meekneſs and Patience, by a quiet Submiſſion to the Will of God, and the lawful Commands of our Superiors. This, Chriſtian Modeſty it ſelf requires from us; for that teaches us to *eſteem others better than our ſelves*, eſpecially our Superiours in Authority and Wiſdom, and to *know them that are over us in the Lord, and to ſubmit to them, for they watch for our Souls.* The doing hereof will beſt diſcover our Moderation, and *ſhew out of a good Converſation our Works with Meekneſs of Wiſdom*; and that will preſerve the Peace and Order of the World, adorn our Profeſſion, and ſave our own Souls. And this we ſhould the rather do,

3*dly*, Becauſe *the Lord is at hand.* With this Argument the Apoſtle here urges his Exhortation, *Let your Moderation be known unto all Men.* Why? for the Lord is at hand. His coming as a Saviour is near, to reward the meek, the patient, and the ſincere Chriſtians; and his coming as a Judg is not far off, to puniſh the lukewarm, the falſe, and the double-minded Hypocrites. The Conſideration whereof ſhould make us temperate in all things, and to moderate our Deſires, Paſſions, and Affections, as to the matters of this World; which is the ſecond Vertue here recommended to us.

The *Third* is, Truſt and Affiance in God, expreſs'd here by *being careful for nothing*, ver. 6. which cannot ſignify the caſting off all due and prudent Care about the Good or Evils of this Life, and to have no thoughts for obtaining the one, or avoiding the other; for the Holy Scriptures often excite us to a regular Care and Concern for theſe things: but the Apoſtle here wills to caſt off all doubting and diſtruſtful Cares about theſe matters, to commit our ſelves unto God in well-doing, and to leave the Iſſue and Succeſs of them intirely to him. In our purſuit of any Good, we are not to leave the Paths of Honeſty and Vertue, or to betake our ſelves to any indirect Arts to compaſs it. In our flight from any Evil, we are not to leave God's way, or fall into any ſinful Courſe to eſcape it: but in both to caſt our ſelves upon God's Providence in the uſe of all good Means, and to rely upon his Promiſes, who *will not ſuffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the Temptation make a way to eſcape*; 1 Cor. 10. 13. If we do on our part what belongs to us, we may reſt aſſur'd,

that

that God will not fail of his; and therefore we may ſafely place our Truſt and Confidence in him.

The next Duty here recommended to us, is *Prayer and Supplication, and in every thing to make our Requeſts known unto God*; ver. 6. This he expects from us, Prayer for the obtaining of Good, and Supplication for the averting of Evil; and hath made theſe the Conditions of his beſtowing of them: *I will be ſought to* (ſaith God) *for theſe things.* We muſt ask before we ſhall receive, ſeek before we ſhall find, and knock before it will be open'd unto us; *Mat.* 7. 7. And ſure they come eaſy enough, if we may have for asking. *In every thing* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *let your Requeſts be made known unto God.* Every thing relating either to Body or Soul, to this Life or the next, all the Bleſſings appertaining to each, are in his diſpoſal, and will be handed to us, upon addreſſing for them: And his Promiſe of Succeſs is ſufficient Encouragement to put up our Petitions for them. To all which is added, in the

Laſt place, the great Duty of Thankſgiving: *Let Prayer and Supplication, with Thankſgiving,* be made unto God. One great Office of this Seaſon, is to render thanks unto God for his ineſtimable Bleſſings; and eſpecially for ſending his Son, with all the Benefits we receive thereby. Hence our Church declares it meet, right, and our bounden Duty, at all times and in all places, to give thanks to the Lord our God. And indeed 'tis but juſt to *give unto the Lord the Honour due unto him:* for the Bleſſings he beſtows, are not due to us, nor deſerv'd by us, they are the ſole Effects of his Bounty and Goodneſs; and therefore all the Thanks and all the Praiſe is intirely his. Neither is this any difficult or laborious Task, but an eaſy thing to be thankful: it requires not now any chargeable Oblations or Sacrifices, nor any long Journeys or Pilgrimages; but all Times and Places are ready for the Duty of Thankſgiving. None are ſo buſy or ſo mean, but may with the primitive Chriſtians ſay, *The Lord be praiſed!* which if it come from a thankful Heart, will be better accepted than the moſt coſtly Hecatombs.

Nor is this Duty leſs pleaſant than eaſy; for *it is good to ſing Praiſes to our God, yea, a joyful and pleaſant thing it is to be thankful*; Pſal. 147. 1. Yea, the Pſalmiſt, who was much exercis'd in this Duty, tells us, that his *Soul was ſa-*

tisfy'd

tisfy'd as with Marrow and Fatneſs, when his Mouth praiſed God with thankful Lips; Pſal. 63. 6.

Moreover, this Duty is highly profitable as well as pleaſant; for as Ingratitude ſtops the Current of Divine Favours, ſo the Vertue of Gratitude opens the Courſe of his Bleſſings, and makes them flow in larger Streams. And we cannot better engage the Divine Bounty to beſtow more, than to be truly ſenſible and thankful for what we have receiv'd already.

Theſe are the great Vertues or Duties here recommended, as proper for the Seaſon, and preparatory to the approaching Solemnity; to the performance whereof, the Apoſtle annexes a Bleſſing in the Cloſe, in theſe words, *And the Peace of God, which paſſeth all Underſtanding, ſhall keep your Hearts and Minds through Chriſt Jeſus*: meaning, that the Practice of theſe Vertues will be an excellent means to preſerve the Peace of their Minds here, and to bring them to everlaſting Peace and Tranquillity hereafter.

To draw then to a concluſion, let us learn hence,

1*ſt*, *To rejoice in the Lord alway*; and from the doubling the Exhortation, *And again I ſay, Rejoice*, let us learn to double our Joy and Rejoicing in him at this joyful Seaſon. The Pſalmiſt, that great Maſter of this holy Exerciſe, upon a remote View of Chriſt's Coming, invites all People hereunto, ſaying, *O be joyful in the Lord, all ye Lands; ſerve the Lord with Gladneſs, and come before his Preſence with a Song: O go your way into his Gates with Thankſgiving, and into his Courts with Praiſe; be thankful unto him, and ſpeak good of his Name.* Pſal. 100. The Apoſtles, upon the nearer View and Approach of theſe glad Tidings, call upon us to rejoice with Joy unſpeakable and full of Glory.

2*dly*, Let our Moderation be known unto all Men, becauſe *the Lord is at hand* to obſerve and reward it: Let our Moderation appear in the chearful and yet temperate Uſe of God's Creatures, not running into any Exceſs of Riot, nor worſhipping our Saviour, as the *Iſraelites* did their molten Calf, by ſitting down to eat and drink, and riſing up to play; but preparing our ſelves for the richer and better Proviſions of Chriſt's Table. 'Twas not (as one hath well obſerv'd) the curious and buſy Houſewifery of *Martha*, but the ſerious and abſtracted Faith of *Mary*, that made the Entertainment at *Bethany*. If we will treat our Lord acceptably, it muſt not be from the Shambles or

the

the Mercers, with coſtly Diſhes and fine Clothes; but with the Sacrifices of Praiſe, and the Adornings of the Holy Spirit. Our Feaſts upon Earth muſt reſemble thoſe in Heaven, where Righteouſneſs is the beſt Robe, and Delight in God the Chear and the Rejoicing. But our trueſt Moderation muſt be ſeen in the well-governing of our Paſſions, that our Anger run not into Extravagance and Fury; that our Love degenerate not into Luſt and Laſciviouſneſs; that our Grief lead not to Deſpondency, or make us ſink under the Croſſes and Troubles of this World: but looking to the Croſs of Chriſt, let us learn to deſpiſe all earthly Croſſes, and to rejoice even in Tribulation.

To which end, 3*dly*, Let us learn hence to put our whole Truſt and Affiance in God, without any carking or diſtruſtful Cares, either about the Neceſſaries or the Afflictions of this Life. For the Neceſſaries of Life, the Apoſtle bids us to be careful for nothing; that is, in a too anxious, thoughtful, and perplexing manner: and our Saviour ſends us to the Birds of the Air, the Beaſts and Herbs of the Field, who are all provided for by the Care and Kindneſs of Heaven, without any Care and Trouble of their own; *Mat.* 6. For the Troubles and Tribulations of this Life, he wills us not to be too fearful or ſollicitous to be kept or deliver'd from them; but to commit our way unto the Lord, and he will bring it to paſs.

Only, in the next place, let us by Prayer and Supplication make our Requeſts known unto God, who is both able and willing to help us, and hath promis'd either to preſerve us from, or to deliver us out of all our diſtreſs, upon our Dependence upon him.

To all which, let us add our Thankſgivings unto God for his paſt and preſent Mercies, and rely upon him for future Favours, by daily Prayers to and Praiſes of him. And then the Peace of God, which paſſeth all Underſtanding, will keep our Hearts and Minds in the Knowledg and Love of him: which God grant, for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt, *&c.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE VIII.

The GOSPEL for the Fourth Sunday in *Advent*.

St. John i. 19—28.

This is the Record of John, *when the* Jews *ſent Prieſts and* Levites *from* Jeruſalem, *to ask him, Who art thou? And he confeſs'd and deny'd not, but confeſs'd, I am not the Chriſt*, &c.

THE Goſpel for this Day gives us a farther Account of St. *John*, in the diſcharge of his Office, as Chriſt's Harbinger, and the Witneſs he bare of him: for the *Jews* hearing the great Fame that *John* had gain'd in the World, and the great Concourſe of People that flock'd to him, to hear his Doctrine and to be baptiz'd of him, began to conſider and inquire farther into him, fearing that there might be ſomething more than ordinary in this matter. And therefore the Beginning of the Goſpel tells us, that *the* Jews *ſent Prieſts and* Levites *from* Jeruſalem *to him*, to know more of it from his own mouth, and likewiſe *the Record* or Teſtimony he gave concerning Chriſt.

The firſt Queſtion they ask'd of him, was, *Who art thou?* being in great ſuſpence about him, and ſuppoſing he might take upon him to be the Meſſias. But his Anſwer was flatly oppoſite to their Expectation, for *he confeſs'd and deny'd not, but confeſs'd that he was not the Chriſt*. The manner of expreſſing it was uſual among the *Hebrews*, in a matter which they deteſted or deny'd with ſtrong Aſſeveration, doubling and repeating it, to put it out of all doubt or fear. Accordingly they ſaying here of St. *John*, that he *confeſs'd and deny'd not, but confeſs'd* that he was not the Chriſt; ſignifies his free and full Acknowledgment, without any Reſerve or Equivocation, that he was not the Meſſias propheſy'd of, and ſo long expected by them.

Whereupon they put a ſecond Queſtion to him, and *asked, What then, art thou* Elias? The reaſon of putting this Queſtion to him, was from an Imagination that the

Jews

Jews had of *Elias*'s coming in Person before the Messias. This they gather'd from that Prophecy of *Malachi*, Chap. 4. 5. *Behold! I will send you* Elijah *the Prophet before that great and dreadful Day, and he shall turn the Hearts of the Fathers to their Children, and the Hearts of the Children to their Fathers, lest I come and smite the Earth with a Curse.* Which Prophecy they wretchedly misunderstood, by applying that to the first Coming of the Messias, a Day of Joy and Rejoicing, which was spoken of his second Coming; stil'd here and elsewhere, *the great and terrible Day of the Lord.* Hence we find some of the Disciples, who likewise mistook this Prophecy, asking our Saviour, that since he was already come, and reveal'd in Glory, without any appearance of *Elias*, *Why say the* Scribes *that* Elias *must first come?* Mat. 17. 10. To which our Saviour answer'd, *Elias truly shall first come and restore all things*, at the last and great Day; but he who was prefigur'd by *Elias* for the first Coming, is already come: so he tells them in the 12th Verse, *But I say unto you, that* Elias *is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed.* By which they understood, that he spake unto them of *John the Baptist.*

And indeed, *Elias* was the Type of this *John*, for he resembled and prefigur'd him in many things; for he liv'd for the most part in the Forest of Mount-*Carmel*, as *John* did in the Wilderness of *Judea*, 2 Kings 4. 25. both leading a solitary and retir'd Life, in the like rough Apparel, and the same coarse and sylvestrian Fare. He was fed by Ravens in his Solitude, as St. *John* was by Bees. He fasted beyond all the other Prophets, and so did *John* beyond all but Christ himself. He was bold in rebuking Vice in *Ahab*, as *John* was in *Herod*; and as the one was persecuted by *Jezebel*, so was the other by *Herodias*. *Elias*'s passing thro the divided Waters of *Jordan*, typify'd St. *John*'s baptizing in the same River: and in many other things he was a Type and Forerunner of *John*, as *John* was of Christ. For these Reasons it was that they put this Question to him, *Art thou* Elias? To which he answer'd, *I am not:* meaning, that he was not *Elias* in Person, tho he was in Figure; for 'tis said he came in the Power and Spirit, but not in the Presence of *Elias*. But this gave them no satisfaction, and therefore they put a third Question to him, *Art thou that Prophet?* meaning, that Prophet mention'd and foretold by *Moses*, that should rise up in the latter Days, *Deut.* 18. 15, 18.

15, 18. or else some special Prophet, (as others would have it) perhaps *Jeremy*, or some other that had been among them, whose Return they expected before *Elias*, as they did him before Christ: for which see Dr. *Hammond*.

But what Answer did *John* give them concerning his being that Prophet? Why *he answer'd, no*; he was not: but finding they could not get within him, nor any thing out of him; they ask'd again a fourth time, and *said unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us: What sayest thou of thy self?*

But why did these Priests and *Levites* use so much Importunity, and shew so great Inquisitiveness into this Matter? Why this proceeded partly from a Jealousy of what Influence *John*'s preaching and baptizing might have upon their Church; for finding the People in such great numbers flocking to him, to hear, and to be baptiz'd of him, they fear'd the Subversion or at least an Alteration of their Polity, and that he was about to bring in a new way of Worship among them; which made them so sollicitous to know who and what he was. And partly likewise, to find some occasion to bring him before the great Court of the *Sanhedrim* at *Jerusalem*, who were appointed to try the Prophets, and to judg of all Pretenders to Revelation: which made St. *John* not very forward to give them any direct Answer concerning himself.

However, at last to shew them that he was neither afraid or asham'd of his Office, he boldly told them who and what he was; saying, *I am the Voice of one crying in the Wilderness, make strait the Way of the Lord, as saith the Prophet* Isaias. This Prophecy is found in that forecited Place of *Isaiah*, chap. 40. 3, 4, 5. where the Prophet speaks of *a Voice of one crying in the Wilderness, Prepare ye the Way of the Lord, make strait in the Desart a Highway for our God.* Adding, that *every Valley shall be exalted, and every Mountain and Hill shall be made low, and the Crooked shall be made strait, and the rough Places plain, and the Glory of the Lord shall be reveal'd, and all Flesh shall see it together; for the Mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

Now St. *John* tells them, that he was the Person here spoken of, and of whom these things were foretold; for he was sent before the Messias, to prepare the Way for him, by levelling and making strait and plain all Places before him: which was not meant literally of material Hills and Highways, as is usually done before great Princes; but spiritually,

ritually, of what was high and ambitious, low and base, perverse and crooked in Men's Lives and Ways, before such a Lord, as was to be entertain'd not in Palaces, but in Men's Hearts. Pride and Vain-glory are the Mountains that must be brought low, the humble and lowly Minds are the Valleys that shall be exalted, Hypocrisy and Fraud are the crooked Ways that must be made strait, Oppression and Injustice the rough Ways that must be made plain. In a word, every exorbitant Lust and Affection must be regulated and brought into subjection to the Faith and Obedience of Christ. This rectifying, smoothing and levelling our Thoughts and Desires, is *the preparing the Way of the Lord, and making his Path strait*; into which we must all enter and persevere, if we mean to arrive at last to eternal Life.

This was the Account, that St. *John* gave of himself, to them who came to make this enquiry of him.

But who were the Persons that were sent upon this Errand? why, that the next Words tell us; *And they that were sent were of the* Pharisees. This is noted to shew the Subtlety and Malice of that Sect, and likewise the Prudence and Courage of St. *John*, in withstanding and frustrating all their Designs; for the *Pharisees* were Persons in greatest vogue among the *Jews* for Learning and Piety. St. *Luke* joins the *Scribes* with them, who commonly went together, and these were the great Doctors and Expounders of the Law, and both were the prime Masters and Rulers in *Israel*: And yet St. *John*, who was train'd up in a Wilderness, and sequestred from all other Conversation but that of Heaven, having never learnt the Arts of Reasoning, nor been bred to any elaborate Schemes of Speech, did yet, by his plain Simplicity, confound the Wisdom of the Wise; nor could those great Masters of Learning and Eloquence get any ground upon him, either by the Questions they propos'd to him, or the Answers they receiv'd from him; he being assisted from above with a Mouth and Wisdom, which they were not able to gainsay or resist.

But yet they were not willing to leave him so; but finding that he deny'd himself to be the Messias, or that great Prophet, they propounded to him another Question, and said unto him, *Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor* Elias, *neither that Prophet?* that is, why then dost thou receive Disciples and Followers by the way of Baptism or Washing, which was the solemn manner of making or receiving Proselytes? or else, by what Authority

thority doſt thou bring in this new Sacrament, in oppoſition to, and contempt of thoſe religious Waſhings, that were appointed and obſerv'd before? By this Queſtion they hop'd to intangle and intrap him; but St. *John* wiſely deſeated them, by an humble and cloſe Anſwer in the following words; ſaying, *I baptize with Water, but there ſtandeth one among you whom ye know not; he it is who, coming after me, is preſer'd before me, whoſe Shoes-Latchet I am not worthy to unlooſe.* In which words he declar'd, that he baptiz'd not by any Power or Authority of his own, but only as Chriſt's Miniſter and Meſſenger, who, ſays he, ſent me a little before him, and authoris'd me ſo to do: which Chriſt is now already come, yea ſtandeth among you, tho ye know him not, having not yet manifeſted himſelf. 'Tis by his Order and Authority (ſaith he) that I do what I do, and upon him depends all the ſpiritual Virtue of Baptiſm, of which I diſpenſe only the outward Sign. He it is before whom I am ſent to prepare the way, and tho he cometh after me, yet is infinitely before me in Power and Dignity, for I am not worthy either to bear or unlooſe the Latchet of his Shoe, and much leſs to be one of his Diſciples. Thus he leſſen'd himſelf the more, becauſe they ſeem'd to magnify him: And Chriſt beginning then to appear, and make himſelf known, he left *Jordan* for his Diſciples to baptize in, and retir'd to *Ænon* near *Salem* in *Galilee*, where being much Waters, he baptiz'd many; and hearing there that Chriſt had manifeſted himſelf both by his Doctrine and Miracles, and that all People flock'd to him to hear and ſee him, St. *John* went and reſign'd his Diſciples and all his Auditors to him; rejoicing greatly that now his Meſſage and Joy were fulfil'd, in great Humility ſaying, *He muſt increaſe, but I muſt decreaſe.* And when ſome of his Diſciples ſeem'd a little uneaſy at this Change of Affairs, he told them, that he was only a Waiter on this Bridegroom of the Church, and that 'twas enough for him to ſtand by and hear his ſweet Colloquies with his Bride; as we read, *John* 3. 26——31.

Now becauſe theſe memorable Paſſages of St. *John* ought not to be forgotten, the Place is recorded where theſe things were acted; the Goſpel concluding with theſe words, ſaying, *Theſe things were done in* Bethabara *beyond* Jordan, *where* John *was baptizing.*

Thus I have conſider'd the ſeveral Parts and Paſſages of this Day's Goſpel; to which I ſhall only add one thing more,

more observ'd of St. *John*, and that is, that in all this great Transaction, *he wrought no Miracle*; John 10. 41. the reason whereof was, that the Power of working Miracles being the best Proof and Evidence of the Messias, it was not permitted to *John*, lest he should thereby draw the People too much to him as the *Messias*; and so their Minds should be distracted about Christ and him in that point: and therefore that Power was reserv'd for Christ only, and those to whom he would give it, as the highest Proof and Demonstration of his Messiahship.

For the Application of the whole, I shall consider some of the principal Vertues of St. *John the Baptist*, and recommend them as far as we are capable to our Imitation. And indeed, next to our Blessed Saviour, whose Forerunner he was, we cannot find a better Pattern to follow, than *John the Baptist*, whose whole Life was a continual Lecture of the strictest and severest Vertue: our Lord himself stil'd him, *A burning and a shining Light*, John 5. 35. he *was a burning Light*, by the Zeal and Warmth of his Doctrine; *and a shining Light*, by the bright and glorious Lustre of his Example. As for his Doctrine, the

1*st*, And great Lesson he taught, was that of Repentance, which he loudly preach'd and proclaim'd to the World, as the best and solemnest Preparation for a Saviour, and that which can alone entitle us to the Benefits and Blessings of his Coming. St. *John* was the first Preacher of the Gospel, and the first open Promulgator of Christ's Kingdom; and the first Doctrine he preach'd was Repentance, the best Means of receiving and propagating both; saying, *Mat.* 3. 5. *Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*; that is, reform and amend your Lives, preparing your selves by hearty Sorrow for your Sins to receive Mercy and Pardon from God by the true Messias, who is just at hand to settle and establish his Kingdom in Righteousness, to give Salvation to such as repent, and final Ruin to impenitent Sinners. And Christ himself at his Coming began his Preaching with the same Doctrine of Repentance, *Mat.* 4. 17. so did his Apostles after him; for we find St. *Peter* preaching to his new Converts, *Repentance for the Remission of Sins*, Acts 2. 38. So that Repentance and Reformation of Life is the prime Duty of the Gospel, the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the Beginning and the End of it. Christ's Kingdom is not so much without as within us, to rule in our Hearts, to subdue the Power of Sin and Satan there: and if we hope for any Benefit by his Coming, we

must turn both out of our Hearts, and not ſuffer any kind of Wickedneſs to reign or abide within us.

2*dly*, In St. *John*'s Doctrine we may obſerve his great Boldneſs and Courage in the Delivery of it; for he was neither daunted with Fear, or diſmay'd with Difficulties in publiſhing his Meſſage. When he firſt proclaim'd our Saviour, a great part of the World were divided in their Opinions about him. The *Phariſees* finding that his Preaching tended to bring in another and more ſpiritual way of Worſhip, and to deſtroy the Ceremonial part of *Moſes*'s Law, which they fondly doted on, began to be mov'd with great Indignation againſt him; whom he therefore treated with a Roughneſs and Severity ſuited to their Malice and Hypocriſy.

The *Gentiles* likewiſe look'd upon this Holy Man as an Enemy to their Idol Gods; and fearing the Downfal of their Idolatries, conceiv'd no ſmall Diſpleaſure againſt him, which made him ſet himſelf againſt them, with a Courage ſuitable to his Cauſe, willing them to turn from theſe Vanities to the Living God, or elſe threatning them with everlaſting Deſtruction. He ſpar'd not the Vices of *Herod*, whom he ſharply reprov'd for his Inceſt with his Brother *Philip*'s Wife; which Boldneſs and Freedom is recorded with Honour in Holy Scripture. And 'twere well if St. *John* had herein more Followers; for tho this Freedom coſt him his Life, yet was it far more honourable by Courage and Magnanimity thus to loſe it, than to ſeek by Cowardice and Puſillanimity to ſave it: which may teach us rather boldly to rebuke, than baſely to fear or flatter the greateſt Offenders.

3*dly*, St. *John* was remarkable for his ſingular Piety, Self-denial, and Contempt of this World; for he abandon'd the World almoſt as ſoon as he knew it, and withdrew into the Privacies of a Deſart to avoid the many Evils and Temptations of it. He affected nothing of that empty Glory which ſo often dazzles the Eyes, and inveigles the Minds of vain Men, but retir'd from it betimes to more ſublime and heavenly Contemplations.

Now this great Example ſhould ſerve at leaſt to leſſen our Eſteem of this World, and to wean us in ſome meaſure from the admir'd Vanities and Pleaſures of it. Tho we are not hereby requir'd to retire into Deſarts and Solitudes to avoid the Snares and Allurements of the World, which in ſome caſes is to run away from the Enemy, that we are to withſtand and conquer; yet we are all taught from hence to take off our Hearts from an inordinate Love and Purſuit of the things here

here below, and to raise them to more celestial and durable Felicities; we are to look upon our selves rather as Pilgrims and Strangers, than Citizens and Inhabitants here on Earth: and like the *Israelites*, travelling thro a Wilderness to the heavenly *Canaan*, counting our Home and Happiness to be there; and then where our Rest and our Treasure is, there will our Hearts be also.

4*thly*, Another memorable Vertue of *John the Baptist*, was his Mildness and Clemency. As he preceded our Saviour in his new and spiritual Doctrine, so did he resemble him too in his Mansuetude and Meekness; for tho he handled the *Scribes*, *Pharisees* and *Sadducees* roughly, as proud incorrigible Sinners, yet towards the Soldiers, Publicans, and other great, but relenting Sinners, he us'd the same Meekness as Christ did, teaching them their Duty for the future, without upbraiding their former Faults: from whence we learn to *restore* erring and offending Brethren *with the Spirit of Meekness*.

Lastly, Let us imitate St. *John* in his Constancy to the Faith, and his patient Suffering for the Truth: He was sent by God upon the noblest Errand and Embassy that was ever committed to any Creature; and he discharg'd it with the greatest Fortitude and Fidelity: He was above the Fears and Frowns of Men, and shrink'd not from his Duty for any Difficulties or Opposition. When he was imprison'd by *Herod*, he ceas'd not to declare and magnify his Message; and being after call'd to bear Witness to the Truth, he most readily and cheerfully seal'd it with his Blood. Thus dy'd this great and holy Man, a glorious Example of Patience and Perseverance in the Faith. And the same Voice that once cry'd in the Wilderness, *Prepare ye the Way of the Lord*, now calls upon us to make ready for him, to welcome his first Appearance, that we may be welcom'd by him at his second; that when he shall appear again with his Holy Angels, we also may appear with him in Glory: Which God grant, *&c.*

DISCOURSE IX.

The EPISTLE for the Nativity of our Lord, or the Birth-day of CHRIST, commonly call'd *Chriſtmas*.

Hebrews i. 1 —— 12.

God, who at ſundry Times, and in divers Manners, ſpake in time paſt unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in theſe laſt Days ſpoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom alſo he made the Worlds, &c.

WE are now arriv'd, from the four Sundays in *Advent*, to the high Feſtival of Chriſt's Nativity; wherein we are to remember the Incarnation of the Son of God, that great Myſtery of Godlineſs, the prime Pillar of our Religion, and the firm Foundation of all our Hopes and Expectations.

The Collect for this Day puts us in mind of the Son of God's being born, not only of the Seed of a Woman, but of the Womb of a pure Virgin, and thereby his taking our Nature upon him; and withal teaches us to pray, that as he was born of our Fleſh, ſo we may be regenerate and born again of his holy Spirit; and as he by his Incarnation partook of our Human Nature, ſo we by ſpiritual Regeneration may be Partakers of his Divine Nature.

The Epiſtle for the Day acquaints us,

Firſt, With one great End and Office of Chriſt's Incarnation, or taking our Nature upon him; and that was to reveal to us the Mind and Will of his Father, which he did more fully and clearly than ever was done by all or any of the Prophets before, as we read *ver.* 1, 2.

Secondly, It ſets forth the high Dignity and Greatneſs of his Perſon, being equal in Glory and Greatneſs to the Father, from whom he came; *ver.* 3.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, It ſhews us his exceeding great Preheminence above the Angels, in ſundry Inſtances and Particulars, from the 4th to the 10th Verſe.

Fourthly, It concludes with the Eternity of his Duration, ſhewing him to be before the Worlds, which he made by his Power; and that he will be after them when all things will be deſtroy'd. Theſe things contain the Subſtance of the Epiſtle for this Day, and muſt be particularly handled.

I begin then, as the Epiſtle does, with the Manner of God's ſpeaking to us now in theſe latter Days, which is much different from that in which he ſpake to our Fathers of old before Chriſt's Coming; and that chiefly in two Reſpects:

For, 1*ſt*, He ſpake to them, *at ſundry times*, by Parts and Piece-meal; ſo the word πολυμερῶς in the Original ſignifies: whereas he ſpeaks to us once for all, and imparts his Mind altogether. Again,

2*dly*, He ſpake to the Fathers by *divers Perſons*, and by *ſundry Ways and Methods*; ſo πολυτρόπως ſignifies: whereas he ſpeaks to us now by one only, and in one Way, and that is *by his Son, whom he hath made Heir of all.* I ſay, God ſpake to them of old *at ſundry times*; that is, he diſcover'd things by degrees, not all at once, but by ſeveral Parts and Steps, ſomething at one time, and ſomething at another; ſomething to one Perſon, and ſomething to another: he did not in any Age or Place reveal them altogether, but proceeded gradually in making known the Myſteries of the Kingdom of Heaven; and the nearer they came to the Fulneſs of Time, the plainer were their Diſcoveries of this great Myſtery of the Incarnation, manifeſted on this Day.

To *Adam* it was reveal'd, that the Son of God ſhould be *the Seed of a Woman*, and that he *ſhould bruiſe the Serpent's Head*; Gen. 3. 15. which was all that was made known unto him.

To *Abraham* ſome time after it was reveal'd, that he ſhould be of *his Seed*, and *that in him all the Nations of the Earth ſhould be bleſſed*; Gen. 22. 18. and that was all he knew of it.

To *Jacob* it was after reveal'd, that he ſhould be of the Tribe of *Judah*; Gen. 49. call'd therefore the Lion of the Tribe of *Judah*.

To *David* it was diſcover'd, that the Meſſiah ſhould deſcend from his Loins; *Pſal.* 132. 11, 12.

To *Iſaiah* it was told, that he ſhould be born of a Virgin; *Iſa.* 9.

To *Daniel* was reveal'd the time of his Coming, which was after ſeventy Weeks of Years; *Dan.* 9.

To *Micah* was diſcover'd the Place of his Nativity, which was *Bethlehem Ephrata*, one of the leaſt among the Hundreds of *Judah*; Mic. 5.

Theſe were things that related to his Perſon, which were reveal'd by degrees to ſundry Perſons; as were alſo his Offices: for

To *Moſes* it was diſcover'd that he ſhould be a *Prophet*, to reveal the Mind of God to his People; *Deut.* 18. 15.

To *David* it was told, he ſhould be a Prieſt, to intercede for them; *Pſal.* 110. 4.

To *Jeremiah*, that he ſhould be a King to rule over them; *Jer.* 23. 5, 6.

Then for his Names:

To *Iſaiah* it was imparted, that his Name ſhould be *Emmanuel, that is, God with us*, Iſa. 7. 14. & *Mat.* 1. 23.

To *Jeremiah*, that he ſhould be call'd, *The Lord our Righteouſneſs*, Jer. 23. and to others after by other Titles and Appellations. All which Matters were imparted to them of old, at diſtant Times, to divers Perſons, and in different Meaſures. But now

All theſe things are reveal'd to us together, and by the fulfilling of Prophecies, ſet in a clearer Light before us, call'd therefore *the Faith at once deliver'd to the Saints*; Jude ver. 1. Their Knowledg was but in part and by piece-meal; but now that which is perfect being come, all that was before imperfect is done away. We have liv'd to ſee all their Predictions accompliſh'd in the Perſon of Chriſt, whoſe Birth and Incarnation we this Day commemorate; by which we are bleſs'd with one entire Revelation of thoſe Divine Myſteries, which were never ſo fully known before. Again,

3*dly*, God ſpake to the Fathers of old not only at diſtant Times, and in different Meaſures, but alſo in divers Ways and Manners. As,

(1.) He ſpake to them ſometimes in Dreams and Viſions; ſo Holy *Job* tells us, *Chap.* 33. 14, 15, 16. *God ſpeaketh in a Dream, in a Viſion of the Night, when deep Sleep falleth upon Men, and Slumberings upon their Bed; then he openeth the Ears of Men, and ſealeth their Inſtruction*, &c. Thus he ſpake to *Iſaiah*, Chap. 6. 1. and to *Daniel*, Chap. 10. 9, 10, 11. and to many others. Again,

(2.) God ſpake ſometimes by the Oracle of *Urim* and *Thummim*; that is, by ſhining Stones, or little Images in the Breaſt-

Breaſt-Plate of the High Prieſt: Thus he ſpake to *David* and others, when conſulted upon occaſion.

(3.) God ſpake ſometimes by a Voice from Heaven, call'd *Bath Coll*, as we read 1 *Kings* 19. 13. which Voice ſounded at our Saviour's Baptiſm and Transfiguration; *Matth.* 3. & Chap. 17.

(4.) *God ſpake to the Fathers of old by the Prophets:* Thus he ſpake to the *Jews* all along under the Old Teſtament, *Moſes* and the Prophets delivering the Mind of God to them, as he had inſtructed them. So we read, *All the Prophets and the Law propheſy'd until* John, *Mat.* 11. 13. after whom the Meſſias or Son of God appear'd, whoſe Birth-day we now celebrate, and ever ſince God *hath ſpoken to us by his Son*; which Son ſpake firſt to his Apoſtles and Diſciples, and by them to us: He preach'd and expounded to them the Myſteries of the Kingdom of Heaven; and they, by his Authority, and the Aſſiſtance of his holy Spirit, have taught and deriv'd down the ſame to us. And as *Moſes* and the Prophets were faithful in God's Houſe as Servants, to whom but little of the Maſter's Mind is imparted; ſo was Chriſt faithful as a Son, to whom much more, yea his whole Mind and Will was imparted, which he as fully and faithfully communicated unto us. And for a Reward of his Fidelity in this Office, he is here ſaid to be *appointed by God to be Heir of all things*, having all Power committed to him both in Heaven and Earth; and likewiſe by him to have made the World, and to rule and govern all things in it. And this will lead me to the next thing to be conſider'd, *viz.*

Secondly, The tranſcendent Glory and Greatneſs of this Son of God, expreſs'd by his *being the Brightneſs of his Father's Glory, and the expreſs Image of his Perſon, and upholding all things by the Word of his Power:* which high and lofty Expreſſions help to ſet forth the infinite Glory of his divine Nature, and ſhew him to have one and the ſame Eſſence with the Father, tho iſſuing from him as Beams of Light do from the Sun, and reſembling him in all his Perfections, as the moſt lively Image doth the Perſon it repreſents. And by this Reflection of the Father's Brightneſs and Likeneſs upon the Son, we obtain in ſome meaſure the Sight of him, who is otherwiſe inviſible. So St. *John* tells us, *No Man hath ſeen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the Boſom of the Father, he hath declar'd him*; John 1. 18. and that ſo clearly, that he told *Philip*, who deſir'd to *ſee the Father*, that

he that hath ſeen me, hath ſeen the Father; John 14. 9. he being the perfect Picture and Pourtraiture of him.

Now the Luſtre of this Divine Glory was too bright for any either to behold or deſcribe, and this expreſs lively Image of the Father's Perſon too glorious to be ſeen or expreſs'd. Our weak Eyes cannot bear or behold the Brightneſs of the Sun, and much leſs can the Eyes of our Underſtanding behold the glorious Splendor of this Sun of Righteouſneſs: a Glimpſe hereof ſome of the Diſciples had at his Transfiguration; at which time *his Face did ſhine as the Sun, and his Rayment was white as the Light*: the great Splendor whereof dazzled the Eyes of the Diſciples, and confounded both their Sight and their Minds too; for *they fell on their Face, and were ſore afraid*, as we read, *Mat.* 17.

Now this Son of God being to teach and inſtruct Mankind in the Will of his Father, condeſcended to our Weakneſs, and was pleas'd for awhile to lay aſide his Glory, which we could not bear or behold, and to clothe himſelf in our Fleſh, that he might become viſible unto us, and ſpeak and converſe with us in a way ſuitable to our Nature and Condition. We read that *Moſes* had once the Curioſity to deſire God to *ſhew him his Glory*; but God anſwer'd him, Thou canſt not ſee my Face, and live; that Sight will over-power thee, and is too glorious for this mortal State to bear: *Exod.* 33. 18, 20. And when the People went up to the Mount, to ſee and hear God ſpeaking unto them, they were ſtruck with ſudden Fears and Tremblings, and beſeech'd God, that he would ſpeak no more unto them, but to ſend and ſpeak by his Servant *Moſes*, and they would hear. In like manner, ſhould the Son of God ſpeak to Mankind in the Glory of his Godhead, they would not be able to ſee or hear them; the Luſtre of his Divine Nature and Preſence would confound and marr all the Effect of his Doctrine; and therefore he vouchſaf'd to take our Nature upon him, that he might ſpeak like one of us, and we might be able to hear and learn from him.

This is the Perſon by whom God now ſpeaks to us in theſe laſt Days: who tho as God, he is here ſaid to *uphold all things by the Word of his Power*, and to keep them from ſinking into Ruin and Confuſion; yet as Man, he is ſaid to ſuffer, and die, and ſink into the Grave for us, that by his Blood he might purge away our Sins: and *when he had by himſelf* done that, he return'd to Heaven, from whence he came, and *ſat down on the Right Hand of the Majeſty on high*. Which will lead,

Thirdly,

Thirdly, To his exceeding, great and high Preheminence above *the Angels*; *For to which of the Angels ſaid he at any time, Sit thou at my Right Hand, till I make thine Enemies thy Footſtool?* Ver. 13. This was an Honour peculiar to the Son of God, and was never confer'd on any of the Angels. This was foretold by the Prophet *Iſaiah*, chap. 52. 13. *Behold my Servant ſhall deal prudently; he ſhall be exalted and extolled, and be ſet very high:* which Words are generally interpreted of the Meſſiah, and ſignify that he ſhould be made ſuperior to the Angels, and plac'd much higher than they, namely, at God's Right Hand. Again,

2dly, The Name and Titles given to him were much higher than any that were given to the Angels; ſo the next Words tell us, *Being made ſo much better than the Angels, as he hath by Inheritance obtain'd a more excellent Name than they*; that is, he is advanc'd to a Superiority over the Angels, by far higher and more honourable Titles and Appellations than were ever beſtow'd on them: for it follows, *Unto which of the Angels ſaid he at any time, Thou art my Son, this Day have I begotten thee?* which is quoted from *Pſal* 2. 7. And again, *I will be to him a Father, and he ſhall be to me a Son*, quoted out of 2 *Sam.* 7. 11. in both which Places he is ſtil'd the Son of God in a more ſublime and eminent manner than was ever ſaid of any other. Again,

3dly, The Preheminence of Chriſt above the Angels is ſet forth by the Worſhip and Service they were commanded by God to pay him, as the next words declare, *When he bringeth in his firſt-begotten into the World, he ſaith, And let all the Angels of God worſhip him:* this is quoted out of *Pſal.* 97. 7. where 'tis ſaid, *Worſhip him all ye Gods*; that is, not only all the Idol Gods of the Heathens, but the Angels, and all that are call'd Gods. Accordingly we read, that at our Saviour's Nativity, the Angels and the whole Heavenly Hoſt brake forth into ſinging, ſounding out that Celeſtial Hymn, *Glory to God on High, on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men*; Luke 2. 13, 14. and after went and paid their Worſhip and Adoration *to the Child lying in the Manger*; which was a full Acknowledgment of his high Eminence and Superiority over them. Beſides which, for farther Confirmation, 'tis added,

4thly, *To the Angels he ſaith, Who maketh his Angels Spirits, and his Miniſters a Flame of Fire:* this is quoted out of *Pſal.* 104. 4. where the ſame words are prophetically ſpoken of Chriſt;

Chriſt; the Senſe whereof is, that the Angels are all at his Beck and Command, and ready to miniſter to him upon all Occaſions.

But Laſtly, There is one thing more that exalts him far above the Angels, and all Principalities and Powers; and that is, that he is God bleſſed for ever, and an eternal King; whoſe Throne is everlaſting, and his Scepter a Scepter of Righteouſneſs; ſo the next words deſcribe him; *But unto the Son he ſaith, Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever, a Scepter of Righteouſneſs is the Scepter of thy Kingdom.* This is taken out of *Pſal.* 45. 6,7. where the following words of this Epiſtle are likewiſe found, *viz. Thou haſt loved Righteouſneſs, and hated Iniquity; therefore God, even thy God hath anointed thee with the Oil of Gladneſs above thy Fellows.* Which ſhews how he executeth his Kingdom, and that is, by promoting of Righteouſneſs, and ſuppreſſing Iniquity both by his Doctrine and Example; to which ends, God hath given him all Fulneſs of Grace, that all may receive of him according to their Capacity.

Thus we ſee the high Preheminence of the Son of God, who was born to us this Day, and by whom God now ſpeaks to us, above the Angels and all other created Beings. From whence I proceed,

Fourthly, To the laſt thing to be conſider'd in this Epiſtle, which concludes with two great Attributes and Perfections of this Son of God; to wit, the Omnipotence of his Power, and the Immutability of his Perſon and Kingdom. The former is in theſe words, *Thou Lord haſt laid the Foundations of the Earth, and the Heavens are the Works of thy Hands*; ver. 10. which ſhew his Divine and Almighty Power, and that he was the Maker, as well as Saviour of the World. The latter is in theſe words, *They ſhall periſh, but thou remaineſt; and they all ſhall wax old, as doth a Garment, and as a Veſture ſhalt thou fold them up, and they ſhall be changed, but thou art the ſame, and thy Years ſhall not fail:* meaning, that tho all other things periſh, and come to an end, tho they wear out like a Garment, tho they are folded up and chang'd like a Veſture; yet he remains immutable, and of his Government there ſhall be no end.

Thus I have ſhew'd you in ſome meaſure the Glory and Greatneſs of the Meſſiah, or Son of God; whoſe Coming into the World we remember this Day, together with his high

high Preheminence above the Angels, and how vaſtly he excels all others in his Glorious and Divine Perfections. From all which we may infer a few Leſſons by way of Application: And,

(1.) From God's ſpeaking to us now by his Son, we learn the great Excellency of the Goſpel-Revelations above thoſe of the Law, and that with reſpect to the Perſons that reveal'd them, together with the Matter, Manner and End of the Revelations: in all which, the Diſcoveries made to us in the New Teſtament far tranſcend thoſe of the Old.

For the Perſons, the Revelations of the Goſpel came from Chriſt the Son of God bleſſed for ever; of whom all the Prophets propheſy'd.

The Revelations under the Law came from Men ſubject to Infirmities, who knew nothing but what they receiv'd from him.

For the Matter, the Revelations of the Old Teſtament were ſlow and imperfect; the Prophets propheſy'd in part, *here a little, and there a little*, ſomething at one time, and ſomething at another: but the Son of God, who lay in the Boſom of the Father, and knew all his Secrets, hath declar'd to us his whole Will altogether, and given us an entire and compleat Revelation of his Mind, and the Means of our Salvation.

For the Manner, the Revelations of the Old Teſtament were deliver'd in dark Types and Shadows, and ſo were very obſcure, and underſtood only by a few; but the Diſcoveries of the Goſpel are clear, open and unveil'd, and the Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, hath appear'd unto all Men.

Then for the End, the Law was only a Schoolmaſter to lead unto Chriſt; it made nothing perfect, but conſiſted only of weak and beggarly Elements, which were but Shadows of good things to come: but Chriſt was the End of the Law for Righteouſneſs, the Prophecies all tended to, and terminated in him, who bleſt the World with better and brighter Revelations than were ever known before.

(2.) If God ſpeaks now to us by his Son, then it muſt be our Duty and Wiſdom to hearken to him; for if God find a Tongue to ſpeak, ſure we ought to find Ears to hear. This, *Moſes*'s Precept as well as Prediction may teach us: for when he foretold of *a Prophet*, that *God would raiſe up in the laſt Days*, not only *like* unto, but much greater than he; 'twas added, *and to him ye ſhall hearken*, Deut. 18. 18. To this we are admoniſh'd by a Call from Heaven at his Transfiguration, when a Voice ſounded from the excellent Glory, ſaying, *This is my beloved Son, hear him*; Mat. 17. And indeed he

only

only hath the Words of eternal Life, and hath ſhew'd himſelf to be a Teacher come from God, as well by the Excellence of his Doctrine, as the Greatneſs of his Works; and therefore we are diligently to attend to him, now ſpeaking to us by his Miniſters.

(3.) From God's ſpeaking to us by his Son, we may learn the Danger of rejecting the Doctrine deliver'd by him: for *if the Words ſpoken by Angels were ſtedfaſt* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *and every Tranſgreſſion of* Moſes's *Law receiv'd a juſt Recompence of Reward; how ſhall we eſcape if we neglect ſo great Salvation, which was firſt ſpoken by the Lord, and after confirm'd by them that heard him?* Heb. 2. 2, 3. And elſewhere, If they eſcaped not who refus'd him that ſpake on Earth, how much leſs ſhall we eſcape, if we refuſe him that ſpeaketh from Heaven?

Laſtly, From his being born into the World, to teach and to ſave us, let us learn for ever to remember him, and that too in the Holy Sacrament, which he inſtituted himſelf for his own Remembrance. The Birth-days of Princes have been ever kept with Feaſts and Feſtival Solemnities: Accordingly the Son of God, becauſe he would not be forgotten by us, hath prepar'd a Feaſt to preſerve and perpetuate his Memory: Let us therefore draw nigh to his Holy Table, where all things are ready to remember his Birth and Death, and where he hath promis'd to meet us, to convey to us the Benefits and Bleſſings of both; which if we do now, we ſhall be for ever remember'd by him hereafter.

DISCOURSE X.

The GOSPEL for *Christmas-Day.*

St. John i. 1——14.

In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; the same was in the Beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was Life, and the Life was the Light of Men, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day of Christ's Nativity represents him to us both in his Divine and Human Nature: by the one, he is equal with God; by the other, he is made like unto Men: both which are mention'd by St. *Paul*, who tells us, that he *being in the Form of God, and thinking it no Robbery to be equal with God, was made also in the Likeness of Men, and took upon him the Form of a Servant*: Phil. 2. 6, 7. both which are more largely set forth in this Gospel. As he is God, he is stil'd here *the Word, the Life, and the Light of the World*; which glorious Titles are given to him in a way peculiar to him, and not to be affirm'd of any other. As he is Man, he is said to *be made Flesh, and to dwell among us*; the Gospel begins with the one, and ends with the other.

The Beginning describes the Godhead of Christ in as high and lofty a Strain as Words can reach, tho infinitely below the Greatness and Dignity of the Subject; saying, *In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*: where by *the Word* is generally understood the Son of God, the second Person in the Holy Trinity, and shews his proceeding from the Father in an unaccountable manner, as a Word doth from the Mouth that utters it. In the Epistle for the Day, God is said to *speak to us by his Son*, who is therefore stil'd, *The Word of God*; and that too, because he only hath the Words of Eternal Life.

This

This Word is here ſaid to be *in and from the Beginning*; that is, before all time, before the Creation of the World, or any thing in it, he had a Subſiſtence with the Father: and this ſhews the Eternity of the Son of God, who is therefore ſaid to be *begotten of the Father before all Worlds.* The Pſalmiſt expreſſes it thus; *Before the Mountains were brought forth, or ever the Earth or the World were form'd, thou art God from Everlaſting, and World without end*; Pſal. 90. 2. by which it appears that the Son is Coequal and Coeternal with the Father. Again, it is ſaid,

That *this Word was with God*; that is, the Son ever exiſted and operated with him in the ſame Divine Nature, and ſo is truly ſaid to be both Co-eternal and Co-exiſting with the Father. Moreover, 'tis ſaid,

That *this Word was God*; meaning, that he had the ſame Divine Eſſence, and that *the Fulneſs of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily*, and ſo was not only Co-eternal and Co-exiſting, but Co-eſſential with the Father.

Again, leſt any from hence ſhould divide the Deity, or frame any falſe Conception of more Gods than one, he repeats his former Aſſertion, ſaying, *The ſame was in the Beginning with God*; meaning, that he was ever one and the ſame with the Father, without any Diviſion or Multiplication of Deities. Furthermore,

Leſt any ſhould conceive the Creation of the World, or the making all things out of nothing, to be too divine and difficult a Work to be attributed to the Word or Son of God, 'tis added in the next Verſe, *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.* Where the Creation of the World, the proper and peculiar Work of God, to be effected only by a Divine Power, is in plain Terms aſcrib'd to the Son. That he was with God at the making of Man, and concur'd with him, is evident from that Saying, *Come let us make Man in our Image, and after our Likeneſs.* And the Scripture tells us, that *God made all things by his Word*; that is, by his Divine Son: for *God ſaid, Let there be Light, and there was Light.* And ſo, *by the Word of the Lord were the Heavens made, and the Hoſt of them by the Breath of his Mouth.* From whence *we underſtand* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *that the Heavens were fram'd by the Word of God*; which is the ſame with what is affirm'd in the Epiſtle for this Day, that *God by his Son made the Worlds*, Heb. 1. 3.

This is the firſt great Title here given him, being ſtil'd *the Word*; which I have briefly explain'd, without running into

into the abſtruſe and myſterious Speculations about the Λόγος.

The next Verſe gives him two Divine and Sublime Titles more; to wit, the Life, and the Light of Men, in theſe words, *In him was Life, and the Life was the Light of Men.* In him was Life; that is, originally and independently, having Life in and from himſelf, and from no other; in which ſenſe he is often ſtil'd *the living God.* And he is the Fountain of Life, to derive it to all living Creatures; for *in him we live, move, and have our Being.* Hence we find him declaring of himſelf, *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life*; John 14. 6. He is *the Way*, by leading us to the Father; *the Truth*, by revealing him to us; *the Life*, by quickening us to a Spiritual and Eternal Life. Moreover,

This Life is ſaid to be *the Light of Men.* His Light ſprung by an eternal Emanation from the Father, as Light doth from the Body of the Sun; and by the bright Beams of his Doctrine enlightens the World in the Knowledg of God, and the Way that leads to Everlaſting Life: call'd therefore *the Light of Life*, John 8. 12. But *this Light ſhined* a long time *in Darkneſs, and the Darkneſs comprehended it not*; that is, Chriſt by his Prophets ſent this Light to the *Jews* of old, and likewiſe to the benighted *Gentiles*; but their Darkneſs was ſo thick and groſs, that they diſcern'd but little by it, as the Eye that is cover'd with a Film can ſee nothing by the outward Light: they had almoſt extinguiſh'd the Light of Nature and Reaſon, and the Light of Revelation was ſo dim to them, that they could not ſee the Way to Life and Salvation.

This was the dark and gloomy State of the World, before this *Sun of Righteouſneſs aroſe with healing in his Wings*; which in the Fulneſs of Time he did to the benighted World, and like the Day-ſpring from on high viſited it with his Salvation.

But before he appear'd, *there was a Man ſent from God, whoſe Name was* John; *the ſame came before for a Witneſs, to bear witneſs of the Light, that all Men thro him might believe.* He was as the Morning-Star to this Sun, to give notice and to uſher this Light into the World, that they might be ready to behold and welcome his Appearance, and by believing in him, receive the Benefit of his Light. *He was not that Light, but was ſent to bear witneſs of that Light.* This Star would not take upon him to be the Sun; tho the gazing Multitude look'd upon him as ſo, yet he did not move out of his Orb, nor act beyond his Sphere. This Forerunner diſclaim'd

all

all Pretences to be the Meſſiah: yea, he takes ſolemn Witneſs of his Denial of it, and appeals to the *Jews* themſelves about it, ſaying, *Ye your ſelves bear me witneſs, that I ſaid I am not the Chriſt, but that I am ſent before him*; John 3. 28. In compariſon of him, St. *John* debas'd himſelf beneath the loweſt Servant, and counted himſelf unworthy of the meaneſt Office: for he being earthly, did only *ſpeak of the Earth*, that is, low and mean things; whereas the Meſſias *coming from Heaven*, ſpake of greater and more heavenly Myſteries, *ver.* 31. of that Chapter: by which it appears that *John* was not that Light, neither did he any way take it upon him; but the whole End of his Miſſion and Office was to teſtify, that Chriſt *was the true Light, that lighteth every Man that cometh into the World*: he it was that ſcatter'd the bright Beams of Light, by which the World is cheriſh'd and directed in the Paths of Life.

Now this Word or Son of God *was from the Beginning in the World* (as the next Verſe tells us) and in ſo eminent a manner too, that *the World* was made and preſerv'd *by him, and yet the World knew him not*; ſo ſtupid were the Generality of Men, as not to own or take notice of him. Yea, after he had manifeſted himſelf by his Doctrine and Miracles, *He came unto his own, and his own received him not*: where by *his own* are meant the People of the *Jews*, the loſt Sheep of the Houſe of *Iſrael*, to whom he was firſt ſent; call'd his own, partly becauſe they were his own Countrymen and Kindred; for he came of the Race of the *Jews*, being born of *Abraham*'s Seed, and deſcending from the Loins of *David*; and partly becauſe they were his own peculiar People, ſever'd from the reſt of the World, and advanc'd above them by many great and noble Privileges: for *to them appertain'd the Adoption, the giving of the Law, and the Promiſes; theirs were the Fathers, of whom as concerning the Fleſh Chriſt came, who is over all, God bleſſed for ever.* Rom. 9. 4, 5. Theſe were the Perſons here ſtil'd *his own*, to whom Chriſt came.

But what Uſage did he meet with from them? Why that the next words tell us, *they receiv'd him not*; yea, they were ſo far from receiving, that they utterly rejected him, deſpiſing his Perſon, refuſing his Doctrine, and contemning his Miracles, and at laſt crucify'd him, putting to death this Lord of Glory. Of the *Jews* wilful rejecting of Chriſt, and their obſtinate perſiſting in Infidelity and Rebellion againſt him, notwithſtanding all the powerful Methods us'd to reclaim

claim and ſave them, the Holy Scriptures are ſo full and expreſs, that I need not ſay any more of it.

But tho the main Body of the *Jews* rejected him, and were for that reaſon rejected of him, yet there was a Remnant of them that receiv'd and ſubmitted to him as their Lord and King, and were for that reaſon receiv'd into Favour, and ſav'd by him. So the Prophet *Iſaiah* foretold of them, *chap.* 10. 21, 22. *Tho the Number of the Children of* Iſrael *be as the Sand of the Sea, a Remnant ſhall be ſaved:* and ſo it prov'd in the Event; for St. *John* here tells us in the next Verſe, *As many as received him, to them gave he Power to become the Sons of God; even to them that believe on his Name:* meaning, that as many as adher'd to him by Faith, and took him for their Saviour, were taken into his Family, and made the adopted Sons and Children of God. And what an Honour and Happineſs that is, to be ſo nearly related to a Father ſo good, ſo powerful, ſo wiſe, and every way ſo able to ſupply our Wants, and to exceed our very Wiſhes, is a Privilege too great to be expected or conceiv'd: and therefore St. *John*, upon mentioning of it, breaks out into Wonder and Amazement, ſaying, *Behold! what manner of Love the Father hath beſtow'd upon us, that we ſhould be call'd the Sons of God.* And having mention'd this high and noble Privilege of being made the Sons of God, he adds ſomething of the Riſe and Original of this Relation, which is not founded on any natural Deſcent or Conſanguinity, but merely on the Grace and Favour of God in adopting us to it; for ſo the next words declare, that we are Sons of God, *born not of Blood, nor of the Will of the Fleſh, nor of the Will of Man, but of God*; that is, not by any way of human Generation, or carnal Propagation, but by a ſpiritual Regeneration to a new and better Life, begetting in us a Likeneſs to himſelf.

And then it follows, that the *Word* before ſpoken of, and by which all this is done; that *Word*, I ſay, *was made Fleſh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth.* Theſe Words containing the great Myſtery of the Incarnation, or the Son of God's being made manifeſt in the Fleſh, the Subject of this Day's Feſtival, muſt be a little more inſiſted on, that we may the better underſtand the Miracle of Mercy couch'd in it, the many Benefits we receive by it, and the great Duties that reſult from it. And,

Iſt, St. *John* here tells us, that *the Word was made Fleſh*; that is, that Divine Perſon who was of the ſame Nature with

the Father, vouchſaf'd to be made of the ſame Nature with us. He who made the World, and had a Being long before all Worlds, was pleas'd in the Fulneſs of Time to be born, and to be made Man like unto us; and *as Children are Partakers of Fleſh and Blood, he likewiſe took part of the ſame.* In this Fleſh he is ſaid,

2*dly*, To *dwell among us*, and in our human Nature to converſe with us; the Word in the Original is ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, he took up his Tabernacle in our Fleſh, and pitched his Tent among us: where there is an Alluſion to thoſe Appearances that God made to the *Iſraelites* in the Old Teſtament; and the Expreſſion ſignifies, that the ſame Divinity that then reſided in the Tabernacle, and fill'd the Ark of the Teſtimony, had now choſen a human Body for his Tabernacle; and this Tabernacle was like ours, movable and mortal, in which he ſojourned awhile as in a Tent, and then remov'd to his former Habitation. Again,

3*dly*, St. *John* tells us, that *they beheld his Glory*; where he farther alludes to that ſhining Glory in which God appear'd to the *Iſraelites* in the Ark, and in the Tabernacle, call'd by the *Hebrews*, *Shecinah*, the Habitation and Preſence of God; in *Greek* δόξα, Glory, repreſenting his glorious Preſence. Hence we often read in Scripture, that *the Glory of the Lord appeared*, Numb. 10. 16, 42. meaning, that his Preſence was render'd viſible and conſpicuous to them. In *Rev.* 21. the *New Jeruſalem* is call'd *the Tabernacle of God with Men*, in which he dwelt with them, *having the Glory of God*, or the Splendor of his Preſence; ſo that *the City had no need of Sun or Moon to ſhine in it, for the Glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof*, ver. 3, 11, 23. Now this Appearance of God in the Fleſh being the moſt viſible and remarkable Appearance, wherein he ever exhibited himſelf to the World, 'tis here expreſs'd by the *Shecinah*, by taking up his Tabernacle among us, and exhibiting his Glory to us: for *we beheld his Glory* (ſaith St. *John*) meaning, that thro the Veil of his Fleſh there appear'd ſuch Beams of Majeſty, as plainly ſhew'd the Sun was there; which could no otherwiſe be made viſible to our bodily Eyes, but by the Refraction of a Cloud. Moreover,

4*thly*, This Glory is ſaid to be *the Glory as of the only-begotten of the Father*; meaning, that it was not ſuch as was ſeen in *Moſes*'s and *Stephen*'s Countenance, a ſudden tranſient Flaſh, but a permanent and abiding Glory; it was not like that of a Servant, nor yet of an adopted Son, but this

Glory

Glory was every way ſuch as well became, and was fit for the only-begotten and true natural Son of God.

But how was this Glory manifeſted? Why, ſundry ways; by a Star at his Birth, by a Voice from Heaven at his Baptiſm, by the ſhining of his Face at his Transfiguration, by the Light of his Doctrine, by the Luſtre of his Miracles, by the Power of his Reſurrection, and the Glory of his Aſcenſion; with many other ways, which ſhew'd him to be the only-begotten Son of God in the Form and Nature of a Man.

Laſtly, 'Tis ſaid of him, that he was *full of Grace and Truth:* leſt the Greatneſs of his Glory ſhould aſtoniſh and affright, he is ſaid to be full of Grace and Favour to allure and invite to him; and that we may not fear of being miſtaken or miſled by him, he is ſaid to be full of Truth as well as Grace, being, as the Evangeliſt elſewhere declares him, *Via, Veritas & Vita*; the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Others underſtand theſe Words with relation to the Law as deliver'd by *Moſes*, and the Goſpel as deliver'd by Chriſt; the Law was full of Terror, Rigor and Curſes; the Goſpel full of Grace and Mercy: the former full of Shadows and Ceremonies; the latter full of Truth, the Subſtance and Completion of them. To this St. *John* ſeems to direct, *ver.* 17. of this Chapter: *The Law was given by* Moſes, *but Grace and Truth came by Jeſus Chriſt.* And all this by the Word's being made Fleſh, and dwelling among us; of whoſe Appearance, this Day of his Nativity, which we now commemorate, was the firſt, and contains the greateſt Miracle of Mercy that was ever done for the Sons of Men; the Benefits whereof are too many and too great to be either related or conceiv'd: for hereby the Son of God became the Son of Man, to make us the Sons of God; and 'tis beyond the reach of any Capacity to comprehend the farther end of the Happineſs of that Relation: for tho now we are the Sons of God, yet it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be, only that we ſhall be like him, that we ſhall ſee him as he is, and ſhall know him, even as we are known. Chriſt having taken our Fleſh, hath thereby endear'd us to him, he being now *Fleſh of our Fleſh, and Bone of our Bone: no Man ever hated his own Fleſh* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *but loveth and cheriſheth it, as Chriſt doth his Church.* All Fleſh may now come to him, who is now one of us, and may come with the greater Boldneſs, having an Advocate and Mediator made like unto us; he being full of Grace and Truth, we may well hope that his Grace will prevent us, and his Truth follow us all the days of our Life.

This is that *great Myſtery of Godlineſs* ſpoken of by St. *Paul*, 1 Tim. 3. 16. *God was manifeſt in the Fleſh, juſtified in the Spirit, ſeen of Angels, preached to the* Gentiles, *believed on in the World, received up into Glory:* which things are the Subject of this Day's Goſpel, and ought to be the Subject of this Day's Meditation. From whence I proceed, in the laſt place, to the Duties that reſult from it: and they are,

(1.) To admire and adore the infinite Love and Goodneſs of God in this aſtoniſhing Condeſcenſion, that he who was one with the Father, and of the ſame Divine Nature with him, ſhould ſtoop ſo low, as to aſſume our human Nature, and not only take our Fleſh, but all the Weakneſſes and Infirmities of it, as to Hunger and Thirſt, to be weary and ſleep, to be ſorrowful and weep, to bleed and die; and all this for our ſakes: This is a Mercy too big for Words, and is to be expreſs'd only with Extaſy and Admiration.

(2.) Let us contemplate the infinite Power and unſearchable Riches of Divine Wiſdom in this Tranſaction; that God ſhould find out a way to reconcile Sinners to himſelf by his Son's taking upon him ſinful Fleſh, and thereby ſatisfy in the ſame Nature that offended; by which means Juſtice and Mercy met together, and Righteouſneſs and Peace have kiſs'd each other. This is ſuch a Project as the Heart of Man could never conceive, much leſs could the Head of Man ever contrive it. Nothing but infinite Wiſdom could bring it to mind, and nothing but infinite Power could bring it to paſs; 'tis a Depth which the Angels deſire to pry into, 1 *Pet.* 1. 12. and is therefore much more to be contemplated and admir'd by us, who are more nearly concern'd in it.

(3.) From the Word's being made Fleſh, and dwelling among us, let us learn to keep it the more pure and undefil'd from fleſhly Luſts. *Shall I take the Members of Chriſt* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *and make them the Members of an Harlot? God forbid!* much leſs ſhould we proſtrate that Fleſh to vile Purpoſes, that hath been ſo highly advanc'd to a Union with the Godhead.

Laſtly, Let us celebrate this myſterious Union of our Nature with his in that Holy Sacrament of Chriſt's Body and Blood, ordain'd on purpoſe for a Memorial of it. The Word was made Fleſh only to make us Partakers of his Holy Spirit, which is only convey'd to us in that Holy Feaſt appointed for that end: there we may behold that Fleſh torn, and that Blood pour'd out, which he aſſum'd merely to make our Peace; and ſhall we refuſe to remember and rejoice in that

Atone-

Atonement? Rather let us take the Cup of Salvation, and call upon the Name of the Lord, who thus humbled himſelf for our Exaltation: Let us compaſs his Altar with Praiſes and Thankſgivings, and offer our ſelves to him, who thus freely offer'd and united himſelf to us; that being made one with him, we may for ever dwell in him, and he in us. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE XI.

The EPISTLE for St. *Stephen*'s Day.

Acts vii. 55. to the end.

Stephen *being full of the Holy Ghoſt, looked up ſtedfaſtly into Heaven, and ſaw the Glory of God, and Jeſus ſtanding on the Right Hand of God, and ſaid, Behold, I ſee the Heavens opened, and the Son of Man ſtanding on the Right Hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud Voice and ſtopped their Ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and caſt him out of the City, and ſtoned him,* &c.

ST. *Stephen* being the firſt Martyr for the Chriſtian Religion, hath his Memory celebrated the next Day after our Saviour's Nativity; for about that time of the Year he laid down his Life in the Cauſe of Chriſt, and ſo led the Van of that noble Army of Martyrs that follow'd after.

He was one of the Deacons choſen by the Apoſtles, to ſerve in the lower Miniſtrations of the Church, as we read, *Acts* 6. 5. and was ſuppos'd to be one of the *ſeventy Diſciples whom Chriſt ſent forth as Sheep among Wolves*, having his Lot, among many of the reſt, to be worried and perſecuted to death by them.

The Collect for the Day minds us, both of the Vertues and the Sufferings of St. *Stephen*, who *ſtedfaſtly looked up to*

Heaven, and by Faith beheld there the Glory that ſhall be reveal'd: And from thence teaches us to pray for Grace, *by his Example, to love and bleſs our Perſecutors, who prayed for his Murderers to the bleſſed Jeſus, who ſtands at the Right Hand of God, to ſuccour all thoſe that ſuffer for him.*

The Epiſtle for the Day, out of which the Collect was taken, calls to our Remembrance and Imitation the ſame things. In which we may obſerve,

Firſt, The Character here given of St. *Stephen*; which is, his *being full of the Holy Ghoſt.*

Secondly, What it was that encourag'd him to perſevere in the Faith of Chriſt; and that was, his Heavenly Viſion.

Thirdly, What it was that enrag'd his Perſecutors againſt him; and that was, a Pretence of his being a Blaſphemer.

Fourthly, His pious Carriage and Behaviour under his Sufferings; which was, his praying for himſelf and his Murderers.

And, *Laſtly*, The happy End and Reward of his Sufferings; which was, a Reſt from all his Troubles, and the Fruition of the higheſt Felicity. Theſe things contain the Subſtance of this Epiſtle, and deſerve to be particularly handled. And I begin,

Firſt, With the Character given of St. *Stephen*, who is here ſaid to be *full of the Holy Ghoſt*; that is, plentifully endow'd with the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit, abounding in the Knowledg of Divine Truths, accompanied with Elocution to enforce his Arguments for the Conviction or ſilencing of Gainſayers. In the ſixth Chapter of the *Acts*, ver. 8, 9. he is ſaid to be *full of Faith and Power, and did great Wonders and Miracles among the People:* his Mind was fortify'd with a full Aſſurance and Confidence in God, and his Words were back'd with the Demonſtration of the Spirit and Power; inſomuch, that in his Diſpute with the *Libertines*, Cyrenians, *and* Alexandrians, *they were not able to reſiſt the Wiſdom, and the Spirit with which he ſpake:* the Word of God in his Mouth being like a *two-edged Sword* in his Hand, *piercing and dividing aſunder the Soul and the Spirit, and reaching to the Diſcerning of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart*; Heb. 4. 12. In ſhort, our Saviour made good to St. *Stephen*, what he promis'd to his Diſciples, bidding them not to fear their being called before Magiſtrates, nor to meditate before-hand what they

ſhould

ſhould anſwer; for he would *give them a Mouth and Wiſdom, which all their Adverſaries ſhould not be able to gainſay or reſiſt*; Luke 21. 14, 15. This St. *Stephen* found, and his Adverſaries felt, who were not able to withſtand that Evidence and Strength of Reaſon, that Freedom and Majeſty of Elocution, with which he enforc'd all that he ſaid; but went away baffled and aſham'd in all their Attempts.

Secondly, But what was it that thus encourag'd St. *Stephen*, and inſpir'd him with this Boldneſs and Courage in all his Trials? Why, that was partly from the Divine Aſſiſtance he receiv'd from the Holy Spirit, with which we read he was filled; and partly from a heavenly Viſion, with which his Eyes were bleſs'd: For the next words tell us, that *he looked up ſtedfaſtly into Heaven, and ſaw the Glory of God, and Jeſus ſtanding at the Right Hand of God.* Whether this were a real Viſion communicated to his bodily Eyes, or only ſome ſtrong Impreſſion made upon his Imagination, whereby a Glimpſe of the Glories of Heaven was in a lively manner repreſented to him; is not eaſy, nor perhaps neceſſary for us to determine. Some think, that he had ſome bright and ſenſible Appearances of the Divine Majeſty, and the Glory of his Son made to him; others, that it was but an Image of it created by God by a ſupernatural Elevation of his Mind, and abſtracting it from the Senſes and Organs of the Body, like Men in a Trance or Extaſy, whoſe Minds are tranſported or rais'd above their ordinary pitch. However that be, moſt certain it is, that this was ſomething of more than ordinary, and a miraculous Viſion; in which *Stephen*, by a ſupernatural Light and Virtue, did ſee into Heaven, and beheld that Splendor and Majeſty with which Chriſt is clothed there, together with the glorious Appearance of Angels about the Throne of God, and his Son at his Right Hand. This bleſſed Sight ſo raviſh'd and tranſported him, that he could not forbear diſcovering and imparting it to his very Adverſaries; ſaying, *Behold, I ſee the Heavens open'd, and the Son of Man ſtanding at the Right Hand of God.* He ſaw the Heavens cleaving aſunder, as it were drawing a Curtain, and opening a Scene to give his Eye a Proſpect of the Glory of the Celeſtial Manſions; where he beheld God the Father ſitting on his Throne, and God the Son not ſitting, as he is uſually deſcrib'd, but ſtanding at his Right Hand in a Poſture of Defence, ready to help and ſuccour

thoſe that ſtand by and ſuffer for him. Which glorious Proſpect made him regardleſs of what was done here below, and fill'd him with Longings to arrive at that happy Place, where ſo great and unutterable a Bleſſedneſs was reſerved for him; which made him deſpiſe both the Glories and Sufferings of this preſent Life. Indeed, the thoughts of Heaven are able to entertain and delight us in the want of all earthly Comforts; and if we have an Eye to that, thoſe Divine Conſolations will be ever neareſt to us, when human Aſſiſtances are fartheſt off. So it was with St. *Stephen*, whoſe Viſion of Heaven inſpir'd him with that Zeal and Courage, which bore him up and carry'd him on above all earthly Diſcouragements. And therefore the Author to the *Hebrews* hath preſcrib'd the *looking unto Jeſus the Author and Finiſher of our Faith; who for the Joy that was ſet before him, endured the Croſs and deſpiſed the Shame, and is ſet down at the Right Hand of the Throne of God*, as the beſt means to keep us from wearineſs and fainting in our Minds, *Heb.* 12. 2, 3. And thoſe many Worthies mention'd in the foregoing Chapter, memorable for the great Atchievements of their Faith, did and ſuffer'd all, by *having an Eye to the Recompence of Reward*. 'Twas this Proſpect that made St. *Paul reckon the Sufferings of this preſent Life, not worthy to be nam'd or compar'd with the Glory that ſhall be revealed in us*; Rom. 8. 18. So that a firm Belief, and a frequent ſight of the Glories of Heaven, by the Eye of Faith, is the beſt Support under all the Sufferings that can befal us here on Earth.

Thirdly, But this heavenly Viſion in the Text, had very different Effects upon different Perſons; that which encourag'd St. *Stephen*, did but exaſperate and enrage his Perſecutors. The Sun that melts the Wax, hardens the Clay; and the Fire which gently warms at a diſtance, ſcorches when it comes too near. The Conſciences of the Adverſaries being ſenſibly touch'd and ſtung by the near approach of the Truths deliver'd by St. *Stephen*, made them fume and fret, and fall into the fierceſt Fury and Rage againſt him: for they preſently *cried out with a loud Voice, and ſtopped their Ears, and ran upon him with one accord; and caſt him out of the City, and ſtoned him*, as a Blaſphemer, for ſpeaking againſt *Moſes* and againſt God. Where we may note,

1ſt,

1*ſt*, Their *crying out with a loud Voice all together*, ſignified, that all this was done in a tumultuous way, by the rude Noiſe and Accuſation of the People, without any due courſe of Law or Juſtice; and ſo he was, like his Saviour, ſacrific'd by the Clamours and *Crucifige's* of the Multitude. They ſuborn'd falſe Witneſſes to charge him with Blaſphemy, and what they could not effect by Truth, they ſought to compaſs by Falſhood; and therefore they ſtay'd not for any Warrant from the *Roman* Governour, to whom the Power of Execution belong'd, nor for the Sentence of the Sanhedrim, without which they could not put any to death; but acted herein the part of thoſe Zealots, who were wont to execute Vengeance upon capital Offenders, without ſtaying for the ordinary Courſe of Juſtice. So wild and furious a thing is miſguided Zeal!

2*dly*, They are ſaid to have *ſtopped their Ears*, partly from an unwillingneſs to hear the loud Noiſe and Clamours of the People; and partly, to be deaf to all Cries for Mercy.

3*dly*, They are ſaid to *run upon him with one accord*; i. e. they cruelly and unanimouſly ruſh'd upon him without order, and without pity. After which they,

4*thly*, *Caſt him out of the City*: their Zeal had in it a mixture of Superſtition; for they would not execute him within the Walls, for fear of polluting the holy City with his Blood, and therefore hurry'd him out of the Gates of the City, where the Executions of Malefactors were wont to be perform'd.

And there, laſtly, *They ſtoned him*; falling upon him with a ſhower of Stones, to cruſh and batter him to death.

And the Witneſſes laid down their Clothes at a young Man's Feet, whoſe name was Saul. The Witneſſes that gave Evidence againſt any, were, by the Law, to throw the firſt Stone at him; *Their Hands were to be firſt upon him, to put him to death*, Deut. 17. 7. Accordingly, the Witneſſes that were hir'd and ſuborn'd againſt *Stephen*, put off their upper Garments to make them the more nimble and fit for their Work; a young Man ſtanding by, named *Saul*, holding their Clothes, or laying them at his Feet till they had finiſh'd their Work. Which thing ſhew'd him to conſent to and approve of what they did, and ſo made him guilty of St. *Stephen*'s Death, as we read, *Acts* 8. 1. an Action we find him after acknowledging with bitter Tears and Grief; ſaying, *When the Blood of thy Martyr* Stephen *was ſhed, I alſo was ſtanding by, and conſenting unto his Death, kept the Raiment*

Raiment of them that ſlew him, Acts 22. 20. Thus they acted this Tragedy upon him; for *they ſtoned* Stephen, *calling upon God*. And this will lead me,

Fourthly, To the next thing propounded, *viz.* To conſider the Carriage and Behaviour of St. *Stephen* under this ſharp and heavy Trial: and that was, not only with invincible Meekneſs and Patience, but likewiſe with the moſt pious and fervent Devotion; for he was upon his Knees all the while they lifted up their Hands againſt him, and ſent his Prayers faſter up to Heaven, than they could rain down Stones upon him upon Earth: *They ſtoned* Stephen, *calling upon God*. Stoning was one of the greateſt and moſt grievous Puniſhments among the *Jews*, and was never inflicted but for the higheſt and moſt heinous Offences; ſuch as Blaſphemy, Idolatry, and the like: which being executed on the Martyr of this Day without any Guilt, he bore it without any Reſentment or Remorſe; and inſtead of being mov'd to Rage or Revenge, he return'd it only with Patience and Prayers. He call'd upon God to ſhew Mercy to them, whilſt they were calling upon each other to ſhew their utmoſt Cruelty towards him.

His calling upon God was, firſt for himſelf, and after for his Perſecutors. Charity, which begins at home, taught him firſt to pray for himſelf; ſaying, in the extremity of his Sufferings, *Lord Jeſus receive my Spirit*. In which he follow'd the Example of our Saviour's Prayer on the Croſs, who then *cried with a loud Voice, and ſaid, Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit*, Luke 23. 46. And indeed nothing can be fitter than to reſign up our ſelves to him, when he in his Providence ſeems to call for us. From theſe great Examples we are taught, in Holy Scripture, *whenever we ſuffer any thing according to God's Will, to commit the keeping of our Souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator*; 1 Pet. 4. 19. So did holy *David*, who in his greateſt Troubles ſaid, *Into thine Hand I commend my Spirit, for thou haſt redeemed me*, Pſal. 31. 6. And this is more eſpecially to be done in the laſt and ſoreſt Sufferings at the point of Death; for having receiv'd our Souls at God's hands, we are to deliver them back again at his call; and when the Body returns to the Earth from whence it came, our Spirit is to be return'd and reſtor'd to God that gave it. And therefore our Church teaches us to recommend the Souls of departing Perſons into

into the hands of God, as into the hands of a faithful Creator and moſt merciful Saviour; humbly beſeeching that they may be precious in his ſight, and purify'd by the Blood of that immaculate Lamb, that was ſlain to take away the Sins of the World.

And as *Stephen* thus prayed for himſelf, that *God would receive his Spirit*, ſo did he extend his Prayers to his bittereſt Enemies; for *he kneeled down and cried with a loud Voice, Lord, lay not this Sin to their charge.* In this likewiſe he trod in the Steps of his Saviour, who in the laſt Scene of his Paſſion on the Croſs, prayed for his Crucifiers; ſaying, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*, Luke 23. 34. To love, to forgive, and to pray for our Enemies, are Duties peculiar to Chriſt's Religion, for which he hath given us both his Precept and Example in his Sermon on the Mount: He tells his Diſciples, that *whereas it was ſaid by them of old, thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour and hate thine Enemy; I ſay unto you, love your Enemies, bleſs them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that deſpightfully uſe you, and perſecute you: for hereby you will ſhew your ſelves the Children of the moſt High.* Matth. 5. 44, 45. And as he hath given us his Precept to this purpoſe, ſo hath he in his own Perſon ſet us a Pattern of this Vertue, which he practiſed to the height, by rendring Good for Evil to all Mankind. This excellent Example was followed to the full by the Saint of this Day, who learnt from his Saviour, to love and bleſs his Perſecutors, and to pray for Mercy and Pardon to his very Murderers. That the Guilt of his Murder might not be laid to their charge, he cried to Heaven to ſtop the Cry of his Blood, and that the ſhedding of Chriſt's Blood might make an Atonement for their ſhedding of his. In a word, he begg'd of God not to avenge his Murder upon them, nor puniſh them for this Sin. And that this Prayer was heard for them that had a hand in his Blood, appears by God's ſpecial Mercy to *Saul*, who was a principal Perſon in it; for he was after miraculouſly converted, which one of the Fathers attributes to St. *Stephen*'s Prayer, ſaying, *Si* Stephanus *non oraſſet, eccleſia* Paulum *non habuiſſet*; If *Stephen* had not prayed, the Church had not had *Paul.* With this devout and effectual Prayer he clos'd up the Days of his pious Life: for *when he had ſaid this, he fell aſleep*; that is, he had a profound Reſt from all his Labours, and was rewarded with everlaſting Repoſe, expreſs'd here by his falling aſleep: ſo ſoft a Pillow

is Death to a good Man! ſo willingly doth he leave the World and lie down in Peace, as the wearied Labourer goes to his Reſt.

This is briefly the Senſe of this Day's Epiſtle: from whence we may learn, ſtedfaſtly to look up to Heaven in all our Difficulties, and by Faith to behold the Glory that ſhall be reveal'd; that by the Example of St. *Stephen* we may learn Patience and Magnanimity in all our Sufferings in Chriſt's Cauſe; and by the Pattern that both have ſet us, to bleſs and pray for our greateſt Enemies, being ready to forgive all the Injuries and Affronts we receive from others, and return nothing but the good Offices of Juſtice and Charity. So ſhall we diſtinguiſh and approve our ſelves to be true Diſciples of Chriſt, and ſhall e'er long receive from him our Reward in Heaven; which God grant, *&c.*

DISCOURSE XII.

The GOSPEL for St. *Stephen*'s Day.

St. Matthew xxiii. 34. to the end.

Behold, I ſend unto you Prophets, and Wiſe-men, and Scribes; and ſome of them ye ſhall kill and crucify, and ſome of them ye ſhall ſcourge in your Synagogues, and perſecute them from City to City; that upon you may come all the righteous Blood ſhed upon Earth, from the Blood of righteous Abel *unto the Blood of* Zacharias, *&c.*

THE Epiſtle for this Day gave us an account of the Martyrdom of St. *Stephen*, who being falſely accus'd of Blaſphemy againſt *Moſes* and againſt God, was put to death by ſtoning; which was one of the four capital Puniſhments among the *Jews*, inflicted only on the moſt heinous and enormous Offenders. By his Example we are taught Patience under the greateſt Sufferings, and likewiſe to bleſs and pray for our worſt and bittereſt Enemies.

The

The Gospel for the Day, which contains our Saviour's foretelling the sad Fate and Destruction of *Jerusalem*, acquaints us with many more that drank of St. *Stephen*'s bitter Cup, and were put to death by stoning; which occasion'd the Church's selecting this Portion of Scripture to be read on this Day: in which we are told of *Jerusalem*'s killing the Prophets, and stoning them that were sent to it, and of the sad Consequents that ensu'd thereupon; for it brought that utter Ruin and Destruction upon the City, as not to have one stone left upon another, as the Sequel of this Discourse will plainly discover.

In the foregoing part of this Chapter our Saviour had denounc'd many Woes against the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* for their wilful Blindness and Hypocrisy, comparing them to *whited Sepulchers*, that *appear beautiful without, but within are full of dead Mens Bones and all Uncleanness:* even so they wash'd the Outside of the Cup or Platter, and polish'd the outward Garb to appear righteous before Men, but within were full of Hypocrisy and Iniquity.

Among other Instances of their Hypocrisy, he mentions their *building the Tombs of the Prophets, and garnishing the Sepulchers of the Righteous*; as if they detested the Cruelty of their Fore-fathers towards those holy Men, saying, *If we had been in the days of our Fathers, we would not have been Partakers with them in the Blood of the Prophets.* Whereas our Saviour, who was privy to the Thoughts and Intents of their Hearts, knew them ready and inclin'd to act over the same Tragedy. Their building the Tombs of the dead Prophets, was but a Covering for their Cruelty to the living, and the garnish'd Sepulchers were but the painted Monuments of their own Hypocrisy: *Wherefore* (saith he) *ye are Witnesses unto your selves, that ye are the Children of them which kill'd the Prophets.* Your Actions plainly testify that you are the Brood of that bloody Race that murder'd the Prophets, and are still dispos'd to do the same things, thereby *filling up the measure of your Fathers Sins:* for which reason he stiles them *Serpents, and a Generation of Vipers*, asking them, *How they could escape the Damnation of Hell?* And then follows the Gospel for this Day, in which I shall observe to you,

First, God's Mission, or sending his Servants and Messengers to them, in these words; *Behold I send unto you Prophets, and Wise-men, and Scribes.*

Secondly,

Secondly, His foretelling the hard Uſage they ſhould find from them; *ſome of them ye ſhall kill and crucify, and ſome of them ye ſhall ſcourge in your Synagogues, and perſecute them from City to City.*

Thirdly, The great Miſchief and Miſery they would thereby bring upon themſelves; *That upon you may come all the righteous Blood ſhed upon the Earth, from the Blood of righteous* Abel *unto the Blood of* Zacharias *the Son of* Barachias, *whom ye ſlew between the Temple and the Altar: which things* (he tells them) *ſhould ſurely come upon that Generation.*

Fourthly, Our Saviour's expoſtulating with *Jeruſalem*, and paſſionately bewailing their obſtinate Refuſal of Mercy, ſaying, *O* Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, *thou that killeſt the Prophets, and ſtoneſt them that are ſent unto thee, how often would I have gather'd thy Children together, as a Hen gathereth her Chicken under her Wings, and ye would not?* And,

Laſtly, The actual Ruin and Deſolation that came upon them; *Behold! your Houſe is left unto you deſolate*, &c. Of each of theſe briefly. And,

Firſt, Of the Miſſion, or ſending of God's Servants and Meſſengers to deliver his Mind unto the World: *Behold, I ſend unto you Prophets, and Wiſe-men, and Scribes.* Where we have,

1ſt, The Perſon ſending, and that is God; *Behold, I ſend you.* And,

2dly, The Perſons ſent, and they are *Prophets, Wiſemen, and Scribes:* by which we are to underſtand all the Miniſters and Meſſengers of Chriſt, whether immediately call'd and inſpir'd by God, or mediately appointed and ordain'd by Men. Of the firſt ſort were the Prophets under the Old Teſtament, and the Apoſtles under the New; who were both immediately ſent and inſpir'd by the Spirit of God. Of the latter ſort are *Paſtors*, meant by the Name of *Wiſe-men*; and *Teachers*, ſet down by the Name of *Scribes*, who are mediately call'd and ſent by the hands of Men: of all which we read, *Eph.* 4. 11. They are all ſaid to be ſent by God, tho not all the ſame way; ſome in an extraordinary, and others in a more ordinary way. In the Old Teſtament we read often of God's *ſending his Servants the Prophets, riſing early and ſending them*; giving them his Meſſages from his own Mouth, and requiring their Fidelity in delivering them. In the New Teſtament we find our Saviour ſending forth his Apoſtles and Diſciples, to prepare his

his way, and to publiſh his Doctrine to the World. And as Chriſt ſent his Apoſtles, ſo did he impower them to ſend others; which he hath promis'd ſtill to do, and to be with them to aſſiſt and proſper them to the end of the World. By which we ſee the great care that God hath taken for the Edification and Salvation of his Church; and likewiſe the great Obligation that lies upon all its Members to be thankful to him, and reſpectful to his Miniſters. Thus indeed it ſhould be, and ſuch Honour ſhould have all his Servants; but it frequently proves quite otherwiſe. So the

Second Particular will inform us, which contains the hard Uſage that the Prophets and Miniſters of Chriſt ſhould meet with from the World: *Some of them* (ſaith he) *they ſhall kill and crucify, and ſome of them they ſhall ſcourge in their Synagogues, and perſecute them from City to City.* This our Saviour tells the *Jews* that they themſelves would do, notwithſtanding their ſeeming Hatred of the Cruelty of their Forefathers in thus uſing the Prophets. *Some ye ſhall kill* in Zeal and Fury, as they did St. *Stephen*, the Saint of this Day, and as they did many others, pretending they were either none or falſe Prophets; which was the very thing their Fathers did before them, and which they themſelves condemn'd in them. *Some*, again ſaith he, *ye ſhall crucify*, either doing it your ſelves, or preſſing the *Romans* to do it; as they after did to our Saviour himſelf, and many of his Followers, clamouring for their Crucifixion, and not ceaſing their Importunity, till they had purſu'd them to Death. *Some*, again, *ye ſhall ſcourge in your Synagogues*, that is, in your civil and publick Judicatures, where many were order'd to be whipt, tho they were not put to death: ſo they dealt with St. *Paul*, from whom, he himſelf tells us, that *he receiv'd many Stripes*, 2 Cor. 11. 24. Others *ye ſhall perſecute from City to City*; ſo they did many of the Apoſtles, who were forc'd to fly from Place to Place, to avoid the Rage and Fury of their Perſecution. This our Saviour foretold would be the Carriage of the *Jews* towards his Meſſengers and Diſciples, which many of them to their ſorrow found and felt at their hands. Of this the Prophet *Jeremy* ſpeaks in the Old Teſtament, complaining how he himſelf and the other Prophets were arraign'd, defamed, and perſecuted even to Death, for delivering the Meſſages which God himſelf put into their mouths. And St. *Paul* tells us, that the Apoſtles and Diſciples of Chriſt found the ſame un-

der

der the New, being haled before Magiſtrates, and perſecuted in every City; and inſtead of being us'd and eſteem'd as *the Miniſters of Chriſt, and Stewards of the Myſteries of God*, were reckon'd as *the Filth of the World, and the Off-ſcouring of all things*; 1 Cor. 4. 13. Neither do the Clergy find much better Uſage to this day, being ſtill expos'd to the Scorn and Contempt of a wicked and diſſolute Age. This was foretold by our Saviour, who ſent forth his Diſciples as Sheep among Wolves, who have worry'd and perſecuted them ever ſince. Now,

Thirdly, This ill Uſage of Chriſt's Miniſters is very offenſive and provoking to him; for he takes all the Injuries and Indignities done to them as done to himſelf: *He that deſpiſes you* (ſaith he) *deſpiſeth me; and he that deſpiſeth me, deſpiſeth him that ſent me.* Which thing will be attended with a ſuitable and dreadful Puniſhment, as may be ſeen in the many Woes and Judgments denounc'd againſt *Corazin*, *Bethſaida*, and *Capernaum*, for their bad Treatment of the Prophets and Apoſtles. And the Goſpel for this Day tells us the ſame; wherein as he foreſaw the Contempt and Perſecution that would befal his Diſciples, ſo he foretold the Vengeance that would ſurely enſue upon it: for they not reforming the Sins of their Fathers, but perſiſting in their cruel and bloody Practices, would thereby fill up the meaſure of their Fathers Iniquities, and bring all the innocent Blood ſpilt by them upon their own heads; *That upon you* (ſaith he) *may come all the righteous Blood ſhed upon the Earth, from the Blood of righteous* Abel *to the Blood of* Zacharias, *Son of* Barachias, *whom ye ſlew between the Temple and the Altar.* The Senſe of which words is, that God would avenge the innocent Blood of his Servants upon them, who were ſo far from abhorring, that they ſeem'd to approve and conſent to their Fathers murdering of them, by imitating them in the like Cruelties: carrying up their Guilt as high as to righteous *Abel*, whoſe *Blood is ſaid to cry to Heaven for Vengeance*; and bringing it down to *Zacharias*, the Son of *Baruch*, call'd ſometimes *Barachias*, of whom mention is made in 2 *Chron.* 24. 19, 20, &c. where he is ſaid to be the Son of *Jehoiadah*, who is ſuppos'd to be the ſame Perſon with *Baruch*, it being uſual among the *Jews* for the ſame Perſon to have two Names. He is there ſaid to be *ſtoned to death*, as *Stephen* was; only their laſt Prayer was different, for *Stephen* pray'd, *Lord, lay not this Sin to*

their

their charge: but *Zacharias* said, *Lord, look upon it and require it*, ver. 21. Now Christ makes mention of him, not because he was the last of all the Prophets murder'd by the *Jews*, but because he is the last of them that were mention'd in the Books of the Old Testament. The sum is, that the Punishment due to the Shedders of all the innocent Blood of the Prophets, should light upon their heads, for persisting in and repeating the same Provocations. Adding withal, *Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this Generation:* meaning, that in that very Age all that Destruction should come upon them, that had been merited by all the bloody Butchers of God's Servants in former time, and that many then alive should live to see it. From whence our Saviour proceeds,

Fourthly, To expostulate the Matter with them, and in the most passionate strain to lament their great Obstinacy and Folly, in so wilfully refusing all the Offers of Grace and Mercy made to them; saying in the next words, *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gather'd thy Children together, even as a Hen gathereth her Chicken together under her wings, and ye would not?* Which is as if he had said, "O wretched and forlorn People, that have "wilfully drawn such heavy Judgments and Calamities "upon your heads, by your obstinate Contempt and Slaugh-"ters of those Messengers that were sent to warn and re-"claim you; how many loud Calls and earnest Invitations "have I given you, to bring you to Repentance, and "thereby to prevent your impending Ruin? How often "have I courted you to come under the wing of my Pro-"tection, where I would have shelter'd and cherish'd you, "as a Hen doth her Chicken under her wing? But ye "refus'd all, you would have none of my Counsel, and "have cast my Word behind your backs; therefore is "Misery coming upon you, and your Destruction is at "hand." Where their Ruin is ascrib'd to the Contempt of Christ and his Ministers, to turning the deaf ear to all their Calls and Admonitions, and, instead of minding, misusing those that preach'd to them. Hence the Prophet in the Old Testament, and the Apostle in the New, bring in God Almighty thus bespeaking the unbelieving *Jews*; *Behold, ye Despisers, and wonder and perish, for I work a Work in your days, which ye shall in no wise believe, tho a Man de-*

clare it unto you. Hab. 1. 5. & Acts 13. 41. The Work there threatned, related to the approaching Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*; which for their not believing, and preventing it by Repentance, actually came upon them.

So the next words of this Goſpel tell us, *Behold! your Houſe is left unto you deſolate:* that is, both your City and Temple are laid even with the ground, and your pleaſant Habitations turn'd into a deſolate Wilderneſs: God who woo'd you by his Miniſters, hath now forſaken you, and will be no more intreated; he hath withdrawn his Preſence and Protection from you, whereby all things are fallen into utter Ruin. Your *killing the Prophets*, hath brought Deſtruction upon your ſelves; and your *ſtoning them that were ſent unto you*, hath ſo deſolated your City, as not to leave one Stone upon another: which made our Saviour, drawing nigh to the City, to weep over it, ſaying, *O that thou hadſt known in this thy day the things that belong unto thy Peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes. For lo! thine Enemies ſhall come about thee, and compaſs thee round on every ſide, and lay thee even with the ground, becauſe thou knoweſt not the time of thy Viſitation.* Luke 19. 42, 43, &c. My Spirit (ſaith he) ſhall no longer ſtrive with you, your time is paſt, and the Gates of Mercy are ſhut againſt you; and now nothing is left to you, but to bear and bewail your choſen Ruin. *For I ſay unto you* (ſaith he in the Cloſe) *ye ſhall not ſee me henceforth, till ye ſhall ſay, Bleſſed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord:* that is, after all theſe ineffectual Calls and Admonitions, ye ſhall receive no more Invitations from me; and when I am gone, ye ſhall ſee me no more till my ſecond Coming, to take vengeance on all ſuch as now refuſe the Offers of Mercy, and reject the Means of Salvation: And tho you now deny me, and deſpiſe thoſe that are ſent to you, yet then you will be forc'd to confeſs me, and ſay, *Bleſſed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord.*

Thus we ſee the Drift of this Day's Goſpel; which may teach us to beware of miſuſing God's Miniſters, and turning the deaf ear to the Meſſages deliver'd by them. We ſee what befel *Jeruſalem* for their ill Uſage of the Prophets, and deſpiſing thoſe that were ſent to them; which brought utter Ruin and Deſolation upon them. We read likewiſe what befel the ſeven Churches of *Aſia*, for not hearkning

to

to the Inſtructions of God's Meſſengers, how they were for that reaſon depriv'd of the Light of the Goſpel, and over-run with Darkneſs and Barbariſm. Let us take warning by theſe Examples, and no longer ſlight the Perſons or Admonitions of God's Miniſters; but rather reverence the one, and receive the other. Inſtead of evil intreating of them, let us, as we are commanded, *eſteem them highly in love for their Work's ſake:* ſaying, as it is written, *How beautiful are the Feet of them that preach the Goſpel of Peace, and bring glad Tidings of good things!* So ſhall we eſcape the Doom of the Deſpiſers of Chriſt, and receive the Reward of his faithful Servants and Followers: which God grant, *&c.*

DISCOURSE XIII.

The EPISTLE for St. *John* the Evangeliſt's Day.

1 John i. 1, to the end.

That which was from the Beginning, which we have heard, which we have ſeen with our Eyes, which we have looked upon, and our Hands have handled of the Word of Life, &c. *that declare we unto you, that ye alſo may have Fellowſhip with us; and truly our Fellowſhip is with the Father, and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt. And theſe things write we unto you, that your Joy may be full,* &c.

WE are to celebrate this day the Memory of St. *John* the Evangeliſt, who being Chriſt's *beloved Diſciple*, or *the Diſciple whom Jeſus loved*, that lean'd on his Boſom, and was admitted to the more private Paſſages of his Life, fitly accompanies the Feſtival of his Nativity.

He was born in *Galilee*, his Parents were *Zebedee* and *Salome*; he was younger Brother to St. *James*, with whom he was brought up to the Trade of fiſhing, and with whom

he was call'd to be a Diſciple and Apoſtle of our Saviour.

He wrote, beſide his Goſpel, containing the Life and Actions of our Saviour, three Epiſtles, containing Love to the Brethren; and the Book of the *Revelation*, containing ſome ſecret Myſteries relating to the Chriſtian Church.

The Collect for the Day beſeeches God to caſt his bright Beams of Light upon his Church, that it being enlighten'd by the Doctrine of the bleſſed Apoſtle and Evangeliſt St. *John*, we may ſo walk in the Light of his Truth, as at length to attain the Light of everlaſting Life.

The Epiſtle contains the Matter, the Reaſon, and the End of writing his Epiſtles; which were all deſign'd for the Good and Benefit of the Church. It begins thus; *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have ſeen with our Eyes, and our Hands have handled of the Word of Life, declare we unto you.* Which words acquaint us with the Subſtance and Evidence of the Divine Revelations: *That which was from the beginning*, meaning Jeſus Chriſt, who was before all Time, and coeternal with the Father; that which was from the beginning in the eternal Counſels and Purpoſes of their Mind, and after reveal'd at ſundry times by the Prophets concerning Chriſt, and the Method of Salvation contriv'd by him: As alſo what we have known to be fulfill'd of what was foretold of him, and confirm'd to us by the Teſtimony of our Senſes; *That which we have ſeen and heard* of theſe Sacred Myſteries, *declare we unto you: for the Life was manifeſted, and we have ſeen it, and bear witneſs, and ſhew unto you that eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifeſted unto us.* Where he labours to ſtrengthen our Faith, by repeating the full and clear Evidence they had of the Truth of what they relate, to wit, that Chriſt, who is ſometimes ſtil'd *the Word*, ſometimes *the Life*, and here *the Word of Life*, was manifeſted in the Fleſh, and took our Nature upon him; of which they were Eye-witneſſes, and convers'd with him, and therefore declare him to you as the Spring and Fountain of that eternal Life, which was promis'd by the Father, and is by him reveal'd unto us. So that (as St. *Peter* elſewhere tells us) *they did not follow any cunningly-deviſ'd Fables, when they made known the Power and Coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, but were Eye-witneſſes of his Majeſty*; 2 Pet. 1. 16. This they ſolemnly declare and teſtify, to beget in us the greater Aſſurance of theſe neceſſary and important Truths.

Thus we ſee the Evidence, but what was the End of their declaring theſe things to us? Why that, St. *John* here tells us, was,

1ſt, *That we alſo may have Fellowſhip with them; and truly our Felloſhip* (ſaith he) *is with the Father, and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt*; meaning, that we may be partakers with them of the ſame Faith, and the great Benefits and Privileges that accrue thereby; as to be united to that holy Church, whereof Chriſt is the Head, and therein to enjoy Communion with God in his holy Ordinances, to derive Grace, and Knowledg, and eternal Life from him; that by this means we may be perfectly united to God and Chriſt, according to our Saviour's Prayer, *John* 17. 21. *That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, ſo they alſo may be one in us.* By which Union we may be ſaid to have an intimate Fellowſhip both with the Father and the Son. Moreover, he tells us,

2dly, That another End of his *writing theſe things*, was, *that our Joy may be full*; that we may be ſtrong in Faith, abound in Hope, and be fill'd with Joy unſpeakable and full of Glory. Our Faith is too apt to ſink into Infidelity, our Hope to languiſh in Deſpair, and our Joy to fall into Sorrow and Sadneſs. Now St. *John* both here and elſewhere preſcribes a Remedy for all theſe, *viz.* by having Fellowſhip with God and Chriſt, and one another. And this is done by the Word of God and Prayer; for *Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God:* and by both we are *begotten again unto a lively Hope*, which is cheriſh'd and turn'd into Joy by devout Prayer. *Ask and ye ſhall receive* (ſaith our Saviour) *that your Joy may be full*; John 16. 24. The Pſalmiſt ſpeaks of *Fulneſs of Joy*, Pſal. 16. and St. *Paul* of receiving of this Fulneſs, which is by the Feelings of God's Grace in the Joys and Comforts of the Holy Ghoſt. To promote this (our Apoſtle here tells us) was one main End of his writing this Epiſtle; to fulfil our Joy, that it may at length flow into thoſe *Rivers of Pleaſure, that are at God's Right Hand for evermore*, Pſal. 16. 12. Which things are here recorded, to encourage all good Chriſtians to be ſtedfaſt in the Faith, and to perſevere in their Chriſtian Profeſſion.

Having thus ſhew'd the clear and evident Knowledg he had of theſe divine Truths, which were confirm'd by the

Teſtimony of his Senſes, and likewiſe the End of his declaring of them, and delivering them down for the good of Poſterity; he proceeds to the ſubject Matter contain'd in them, in the next Words: *This then is the Meſſage, which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is Light, and in him is no Darkneſs at all.* Where he gives us a brief Summary of the Goſpel preach'd by Chriſt, and teſtified by them that heard him, and is now made known unto us. The firſt and principal ground whereof, and the Foundation of all the reſt, conſiſts in the true Knowledg of God; *whom to know is Eternal Life*, John 17. 3. And therefore the Meſſage here deliver'd by St. *John*, is to give us a right Underſtanding of his Nature and Will. To which end he tells us, that *God is Light, and in him is no Darkneſs at all.* He is of a pure ſpiritual Nature, ſhining in Truth, Holineſs, and Glory; void of all Error, Falſhood, or any kind of Iniquity.

Now Light is in Scripture often us'd to ſignify both Knowledg and Purity: And Darkneſs, on the other hand, is ſet to repreſent Ignorance and Impurity.

When God then is ſaid to be *Light*, it ſignifies,

1ſt. That he is a *God of Knowledg*; ſo he is ſtiled in 1 *Sam.* 23. yea, he is infinite in Knowledg, and nothing can be hid from the Light thereof. *In him are hid* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *all the Treaſures of Wiſdom and Knowledg*: and all the Knowledg that is in any of his Creatures, is intirely owing to and derived from him. God is the Spring and Fountain of all, call'd therefore by St. *James*, *The Father of Lights*, Chap. 1. 17. And as the Sun is the Source of all ſublunary Light, from whom the Moon and the Stars receive it; ſo is God the Author and Beſtower of all that Knowledg, by which our Minds are any way enlighten'd.

And as Light in Scripture ſignifies Knowledg, for which reaſon God is ſaid to be *Light*, as having all Knowledg in and from himſelf; ſo doth it ſometimes ſignify the moſt perfect and immaculate Purity. Upon which account he is ſaid to be a *God of Purity*, and of purer Eyes than to behold the leaſt Iniquity: He hates all Impurity of Body or Mind, and cannot diſcern the leaſt Defilement without Abhorrence and Indignation. And as his Nature is, ſo are his Commandments pure and free from all Pollution: *The Law of the Lord is an undefiled Law*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *converting the Soul. The Teſtimonies of the Lord are ſure, and give Wiſdom to the Simple. The Fear of the Lord is clean,*

and

and endureth for ever. The Statutes of the Lord are pure and righteous altogether. Pſal. 19. 7, 8, 9. God requireth all Purity of Heart and Life, and nothing that is otherwiſe can abide in his ſight: for God is ſaid to be Light in reſpect of Purity as well as Knowledg, and they that hope to ſee or enjoy him, muſt *purify themſelves even as he is pure*; 1 John 3. 3.

Morever, God is ſo ſaid to be *Light*, that in him is no Darkneſs at all: He is all Light without the leaſt Obſcurity, and no Darkneſs can approach to ſully the Brightneſs of his Glory. Now Darkneſs in Scripture ſignifies both Ignorance and Impurity; both which are to be remov'd from the Notion and Nature of God.

For, *1ſt*, in him is no Darkneſs of Error or Ignorance; he that is Infinite in Knowledg and knoweth all things, can be ignorant of nothing. 'Twas the Language of an Atheiſt to ſay, *Tuſh, how doth God know; and is there Knowledg in the moſt High?* Yes, *He that made the Eye, ſhall not he ſee? And he that teacheth Man Knowledg, ſhall not he know?* As nothing can be impoſſible to an infinite Power, ſo nothing can be hid from infinite Wiſdom; his Eye pierceth into the darkeſt Corners, and he knoweth the very Secrets of the Heart.

2dly, In him is no Darkneſs of Sin or Impurity. Sin is frequently ſet forth by the black Name of *Darkneſs*, becauſe it *hateth the Light, and cometh not to the Light, leſt its Deeds ſhould be reproved*; John 3. It covets Darkneſs in the Acting, and tends to Darkneſs in the Iſſue; and ſo may well be repreſented by that black Character. Now as the Light of the Sun diſpels the Darkneſs of the Night, ſo the Light of God's Grace ſcatters the thick Miſts of Sin and Error. So that he that hath *Fellowſhip with the unfruitful Works of Darkneſs*, can have no Fellowſhip with God, who is the *Father of Light*: For *what Communion hath Light with Darkneſs? what Fellowſhip hath Righteouſneſs with Unrighteouſneſs? And what Concord hath Chriſt with* Belial? 2 *Cor.* 6. 14, 15. In a word, in God is the greateſt Purity, Truth and Sincerity, and there is no Impurity or Unrighteouſneſs in him; for which reaſon he is ſaid to be Light, and in him is no Darkneſs at all.

If then we ſay, we have Fellowſhip with him, and walk in Darkneſs, we lye, and do not the Truth. If we pretend to be partakers of his Purity, and would be thought to have any Conformity or Communion with him, and at the ſame

time live in any ſinful Courſe, or allow our ſelves in any Impurity, we neither ſpeak nor act truly, but falſify both in Words and Deeds. *We lye, and do not the Truth*; we do not deal ſincerely, our Practice gives the Lye to our Profeſſion, and our Actions confute our goodlieſt Pretences: For a real Union and Communion with God will be ever attended with a participation of the Graces and Vertues of his Holy Spirit, and make us in ſome meaſure partakers of the Divine Nature; without which, all Pretenſions to theſe things are no better than Falſhood and Hypocriſy. And therefore

The Apoſtle adds in the following words, *But if we walk in the Light, as he is in the Light, we have Fellowſhip with him and one another, and the Blood of Jeſus Chriſt his Son cleanſes us from all Sin.* If we live in Purity, as he is pure, having the Love and Fear of God planted in our Hearts, and manifeſting it in the outward Courſe of our Lives and Actions; if we walk in the Light, ſo as to make it ſhine before Men, by being Examples of Holineſs and Vertue; doing nothing but what can bear the Light, and paſs the Trial and Obſervation of the World: then do we communicate with him in the Gifts and Graces of his Holy Spirit, and reſemble the Purity of our Maker. God is indeed abſolutely pure in his own Nature, and a perfect Pattern of it to all his Creatures, but we are but imperfectly ſo by a pious Imitation of his Purity: which yet if we do what we can to follow him, he will accept of us, and look upon us as clean and pure in his ſight; *For the Blood of Jeſus Chriſt his Son, cleanſeth us from all Sin.* He ſhed his Blood on purpoſe to waſh away the Guilt and Pollution of our Iniquities: And if we add to that, the Tears of Contrition and Repentance, it will be effectual to cleanſe us from all paſt Sins, and to prevent the future.

But yet we muſt not infer from hence, that this will bring us to a State of abſolute Purity and Perfection here in this Life, ſo as to be free from all Sin, and ſecure from falling into it any more: for *if we ſay we have no Sin, we deceive our ſelves, and the Truth is not in us.* Tho the Blood of Chriſt cleanſeth us from the Guilt of Sin, yet it doth not wholly rid us of the Being of it; for the beſt of us being but regenerate in part, are left to ſtruggle here with ſome Remainders of Corruption. There were indeed ſome in the Apoſtles Days, as there are alſo in ours, who pretend to a State of Perfection, and think and ſay, they have

no

no Sin; but ſuch do but put a Fallacy or Cheat upon themſelves, which is the worſt kind of Deceit, to be their own Impoſtors, and to be acceſſary to their own Deluſion: *They deceive themſelves, and the Truth is not in them.* For Truth it ſelf hath told us, that *we have all ſinned, and come ſhort of the Glory of God*; and *that in many things we offend all.* So that to pretend otherwiſe, is to ſhew our ſelves void of all Truth, and to impoſe both upon our ſelves and others.

And therefore our Apoſtle, inſtead of denying, puts us upon confeſſing our Sins, as the beſt Means to obtain the Pardon of them; ſaying, *If we confeſs our Sins, he is faithful and juſt to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanſe us from all Unrighteouſneſs.* Where the Apoſtle, to encourage us to the Duty, ſecures to us the Succeſs; telling us, that the Faithfulneſs and Juſtice of God are engag'd to pardon our Sins, upon our penitent confeſſing of them: for God having made this the Condition of Forgiveneſs, hath thereby oblig'd himſelf to grant it upon the Performance of that Condition: *He is faithful and juſt to forgive us our Sins*; as if he could not be either without it, and that becauſe he hath made many Promiſes to us to that purpoſe: *He that confeſſeth and forſaketh his Sins, ſhall find Mercy*, ſaith he, *Prov.* 28. 13. And again, *I am he that will blot out thine Iniquities, and will remember thy Sins no more*; Iſa. 43. 25.

Now he is faithful that hath promiſed; *For God is not a Man that he ſhould lye, nor the Son of Man that he ſhould repent. Hath he ſaid it, and will he not do it? Hath he ſpoken it, and ſhall it not come to paſs?* Yes ſurely, for the God of Truth cannot falſify or fail of his Word, eſpecially having ſeal'd it with an Oath; *that by two immutable things, wherein it was impoſſible for God to lye, we may have the ſtronger Aſſurance and Conſolation*; Heb. 6. 17, 18. So that if we confeſs our Sins, the Faithfulneſs and Juſtice of God will oblige him to forgive us: upon which therefore we may ſafely depend. Of this ſee more, Vol. I. *p.* 93.

Finally, To ſay we have no Sin is to *make God a Lyar, and his Word is not in us.* For God hath concluded all under Sin, and they that think or ſay they have not ſinned, are the greateſt of Sinners, as falſifying with God and Men.

Thus we ſee the Senſe of the Epiſtle for this Day; which ſhews the clear Evidence we have of the Chriſtian Religion,

gion, from the Teſtimony of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and the Miracles done by both. As alſo the End of Writing the Truths reveal'd by it; to wit, that we may have Fellowſhip with the Father and the Son; together with the Meſſage deliver'd by them, that God is all Light and Purity, without any Mixture of Darkneſs or Impurity; and that we are all Sinners, full of Darkneſs and Error, having no way but Confeſſion and Repentance, to be deliver'd from them. All which are great and weighty Truths, worthy of our moſt ſerious Thoughts and Meditations, which we ſhall do well to beſtow upon them.

DISCOURSE XIV.

The GOSPEL for St. *John*'s Day.

St. John xxi. 19, to the end.

Jeſus *ſaid unto* Peter, *Follow me. Then* Peter *turning about, ſeeth the Diſciple whom Jeſus loved following; which alſo leaned on his Breaſt at Supper, and ſaid, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?* Peter *ſeeing him, ſaith to Jeſus, Lord, and what ſhall this Man do? Jeſus ſaith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me,* &c.

THIS Goſpel for the Day contains Chriſt's Call to St. *Peter*, together with ſome Diſcourſe that paſt between our Saviour and him concerning St. *John*; both which will afford Matter worthy of our Notice and Conſideration. And,

Firſt, Of our Saviour's Call to St. *Peter*, in theſe Words, *Jeſus ſaid unto* Peter, *follow me.* This was the conſtant Form of Words uſed by our Saviour, in calling his Apoſtles and Diſciples, *Follow me*: The import of which Phraſe was, that they ſhould ſequeſter themſelves from the Encumbrances of the World, and become Attendants upon him; to hear

hear his Doctrine, and to be Eye-witnesses of the Miracles with which he confirm'd it: for the Apostles and Disciples were not only to learn of him themselves, but to teach and instruct others; the Church which Christ planted, was to be water'd and propagated by them; they were to turn Men from the Darkness of Paganism to the Light of the Gospel, and from the Power of Satan to the Knowledg of God. To fit them for these great and eminent Services, our Saviour singled them out to be his own Scholars and Companions, and taught them himself the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. He establish'd them in the Belief of his being the promised Messias, and furnish'd them with that Evidence and Demonstration of the Spirit, that all the Power and Wisdom of the World could not withstand. And that they might the better attend this great Work, he bid them quit all other Employments, and follow him. Thus he call'd *Matthew* to give his Attendance upon him, who thereupon left his Publican's Stall to be a Preacher of Righteousness. The like Charge he gave to *Andrew*, *James*, and *John*, the Sons of *Zebedee*, whom finding by the Sea mending their Nets, he called them to quit their Nets and Trade of fishing, and to follow him; letting them know that he had other Work for them, and that instead of Fish they should henceforth catch Men: which they after did, by bringing in Sholes of Converts to the Christian Faith. So particularly did St. *Peter*, who was of the same Profession, and to whom Jesus said, *Follow me*; who thereupon immediately left all and follow'd him. And we still are call'd upon to be Christ's Followers, tho not so immediately to attend his Person as they did; yet to follow his Doctrine deliver'd by him, and to tread in the Steps of his Example, which he hath chalk'd out for us: for he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, that can alone lead us to Life Everlasting.

This then was the usual Form and Method of Christ's making and gathering Disciples, by which he call'd them from the Cares and Encumbrances of this Life, to attend weightier Matters, and to become his Servants and Followers.

And as *Peter* was following Christ, *turning about, he saw the Disciple whom Jesus loved, likewise following.* This was *John*, who was peculiarly dear to his Lord and Master, and was treated by him with more Freedom and Familiarity than the rest, as appears by the honourable Place that Christ

gave

gave him above all others; for *he leaned on his Breaſt at Supper.* It was (as we are told) the Cuſtom of thoſe Times, to lie along at Meals upon Couches, where the ſecond lay with his Head in the Boſom of him that was before him: This was the Place aſſign'd to our Apoſtle, who lay in our Saviour's Boſom at the Paſchal Supper, and was admitted to his Secrets, and to know more of his Mind than the other Diſciples. When our Saviour told his Apoſtles that they were not all true to him, but one of them would prove a Traitor, *Peter*, who had deny'd him, would not venture to ask who it was, but put St. *John* upon it, whoſe dearneſs and familiarity with him might give him greater Boldneſs, to propound the Queſtion to him; ſaying, *Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?* To which, tho no Reply be mention'd here, yet in Chap. 13. 23. *Jeſus anſwered, He it is to whom I ſhall give a Sop, when I have dipped it; and when he had dipped it, he gave it to* Judas Iſcariot *the Son of* Simon: *after which, Satan enter'd into him, and he quickly deliver'd him up.* Where we may obſerve, that our Saviour would not reveal the Treachery of *Judas* to them all, to make it the more publick: which may teach us rather to conceal than publiſh the Faults of one another; for *Charity will cover a multitude of Sins.* Yet notwithſtanding he thought fit to reveal it unto *John*, tho not directly, yet by Signs and Tokens; to let us know that we may and ought to diſcover the Miſcarriages of others to fit Perſons and at fit Seaſons, when it may tend moſt to the Glory of God, and the Good of Mankind. But to go on:

Chriſt having told *Peter* what was to be his Fate, or by what manner of Death he ſhould die, Ver. 18, 19. *Verily, I ſay unto thee, when thou waſt young thou girdedſt thy ſelf, and walkedſt whither thou wouldſt; but when thou ſhalt be old, thou ſhalt ſtretch forth thy Hands, and another ſhall gird thee, and carry thee where thou wouldſt not:* meaning, that in his old Age he ſhould be led forth like a Captive, and carried bound to the Place of Execution; *ſignifying thereby, by what Death he ſhould glorify God:* which by ſtretching forth his Hands, and being carried bound where he would not, ſhew'd it to be by Crucifixion; by which he afterward confeſs'd and glorify'd Chriſt.

Now *Peter* being told ſomething of his own Death, *ſeeing* John, *ſaid unto Jeſus, And what ſhall this Man do?* that is, what ſhall this Man's Fate be? or how ſhall he die? To which our Saviour gave a ſmart Reply, checking his Curioſity,

rioſity, and *ſaying unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.* If I mean to continue his Life longer than others, what does that concern thee? follow thou me. Our Lord had told them, that there were ſome among them that ſhould live to ſee his Coming in Judgment upon *Jeruſalem*; which is the meaning of that Saying of his, *Matth.* 16. 28. *Verily, I ſay unto you, there be ſome ſtanding here that ſhall not taſte of Death, till they ſee the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom.* And of theſe St. *John* was ſuppos'd to be one, for he liv'd to ſee the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and many Years after it. Now St. *Peter* prying too far into this Affair of St. *John*, met with this ſmart Rebuke, "What if I will that he live to my "coming at that time, what Concern is that of thine? or "what matter is that to thee? Do thou keep cloſe to thy "Duty in following me; which as thou haſt hitherto done "in the Diſcipleſhip, ſo muſt thou ſhortly in Sufferings "too, and therefore mind and prepare for them."

But the Diſciples miſunderſtood that ſaying of our Lord, *What if I will that he tarry till I come?* Taking that for his final coming to Judgment at the laſt Day, which was meant only of his coming in Judgment upon the *Jews*, and the final overthrow of *Jeruſalem*, ſo often mention'd in the New Teſtament. And from that miſtake *there went a ſaying among the Brethren, that that Diſciple ſhould not die.* Which Report went ſo generally current among them, that as they took *John the Baptiſt* for his Fore-runner at his firſt Coming in the Fleſh, ſo they thought *John the Evangeliſt* was to be his Fore-runner at his coming in the laſt Day to Judgment; that he ſhould live to that time, and then not die, but be tranſlated into Heaven. Hence we find one *Ephrem*, Patriarch of *Antioch*, affirming, that there were three from the Beginning of the World to the End of it, that ſhould undergo this Tranſlation; *Enoch* before the giving of the Law; *Elias* under the Law; and St. *John* under the Goſpel. But St. *John* himſelf, in relating this Paſſage, confutes this miſtake, ſaying here, *That Jeſus ſaid not unto him, he ſhall not die; but if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?* that is, "If *John* be one of thoſe that ſhall live to "ſee my executing Vengeance upon my Crucifiers, what "Concern is that of thine? thy Buſineſs is to diſpoſe thy "ſelf to obey and ſuffer for me, and to follow me to the "Croſs; which will better become thee, than ſuch a vain "and needleſs Curioſity." So that our Saviour's words

were not meant of *John*'s not ſeeing Death, but that his Life ſhould be prolong'd beyond the reſt; and indeed ſo it was, for he liv'd and preach'd the Goſpel above thirty Years after Chriſt's Aſcenſion into Heaven, and died above a hundred Years old in the time of the Emperor *Trajan*. This is the ſum of the Diſcourſe that paſt between our Saviour and St. *Peter* concerning *John*; of whom 'tis ſaid, in the

Next Verſe, *This is the Diſciple that teſtifieth of theſe things, and wrote theſe things, and we know that his Teſtimony is true*: meaning, that St. *John* was the Author of that Goſpel that goes under his name, and that he was both the Witneſs and the Writer of the things related in it, for he preach'd it in the Churches of *Aſia*, and at the requeſt of the *Aſian* Biſhops wrote and publiſh'd it. And the Chriſtians of *Aſia*, eſpecially thoſe of the Church of *Epheſus*, where he reſided, were ſo confirm'd in the Belief of it by the Doctrine and Miracles contain'd in it, that they were well aſſur'd of the Truth of his Teſtimony, and could ſet their Seal to all that was deliver'd by him. But beſide that Goſpel,

He wrote alſo three Epiſtles; the firſt Catholick to all Chriſtians; the ſecond to an Elect Lady and her Children; the third to the beloved *Gaius*, whom he lov'd in the Lord. All which breathe out nothing but unfeign'd Love to God and our Neighbour. Moreover,

During his Exile and Confinement in the Iſle of *Patmos*, he wrote likewiſe the abſtruſe Book of the *Revelation*, containing many dark Myſteries, Viſions, and Prophecies of ſome future Events relating to Chriſt's Church and Kingdom.

Theſe Books have been by the general Conſent and Tradition of the Chriſtian Church own'd for the Writings of St. *John*, and have been all receiv'd for Canonical: which Apoſtle ſpake more expreſly of the ſublime Myſteries of Religion, ſuch as the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the Divinity of Chriſt, the Reſurrection of the Dead, and the Life everlaſting, than all or any of the other Evangeliſts. And therefore as St. *Matthew* is repreſented in the ſhape of a Man, for beginning with the Birth and human Nature of Chriſt; St. *Mark* of a Lion, for beginning with the Voice of one crying in the Wilderneſs; and St. *Luke* of an Ox, for beginning with *Zacharias* the Prieſt's offering Sacrifice: ſo St. *John* is ſet forth in the ſhape of a flying Eagle, for beginning with the Divine Nature of Chriſt, ſoaring above

the

the rest in these Sacred Mysteries, and supplying the Defects of the other three. And as he spake, so did he write more of the Acts and Miracles of our Saviour, than any of them.

And yet he adds in the close of this Gospel, *There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the World it self could not contain the Books that should be written.* A hyperbolical Expression, signifying the great multitude of wise Sayings, and the immense number of wonderful Works that were utter'd and done by him; which if they were all put into writing, they would swell into so many Volumes, as even to fill the World with the Noise and Number of them.

To St. *John*'s Writings we must add something of his Sufferings for the Name of Christ: He met with great Cruelty and hard Usage from the Emperor *Domitian* for his adhering to, and propagating the Christian Faith. Among other barbarous Treatment, he was by the Proconsul of *Asia* cast into a Cauldron of boiling Oil, or Oil set on fire; but it pleas'd God to save and deliver him out of it, as he did the three Children out of the fiery Furnace, and *Daniel* out of the Lions Den. But the cruel Emperor finding he could not dispatch him that way, order'd him to be banish'd into the Isle of *Patmos*, where he remain'd for some years, preaching the Gospel to the Inhabitants of that Island, till after the death of *Domitian*, when he return'd again to *Ephesus*; where finding *Timothy* their Bishop crown'd with Martyrdom, he took upon him the Government of that Church, till the time of *Trajan*, in whose Reign he died in a good old Age. This is a brief Account of the Gospel for this Day, and the Saint concern'd in it; both which will instruct us in many good Lessons. As,

From Christ's calling upon St. *Peter* and the other Disciples to leave all and follow him, we may learn the great Lesson of Self-denial, and to follow him in the rough as well as the smoother ways of our Duty. This is the first Lesson to be learnt in Christ's School; *If any will be my Disciple* (saith he) *let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me.* 'Tis the first step we advance in Christianity; and he that boggles at this, stumbles at the Threshold, and deserts his Saviour at the first setting out. And too many such there are, who instead of leaving all for Christ,

Christ, will leave Christ for every Trifle, and prefer the gratifying of a Lust, before the Love of their Saviour. But these are not so much the Followers, as the Forsakers of Christ, and must never hope to receive any Benefit by him. Wherefore to approve our selves to be his Disciples, let us be willing to accompany him in his Sufferings, as well as to partake of his Glories; and to follow him to the Cross, if we mean to follow him to a Crown.

2dly, From Christ's checking St. *Peter*'s Curiosity about the time and manner of St. *John*'s Death, we may learn to avoid all idle and curious Questions about Matters which concern not us to know: This was St. *Paul*'s Advice to *Timothy*, to *avoid all profane and vain Bablings, and Oppositions of Science falsly so call'd*; 1 Tim. 6. 20. And in the second Epistle, *Chap.* 2. 16. he repeats the same Counsel, *Shun all profane and vain Bablings, for they will increase to more Ungodliness.* Instead of informing the Mind, they only corrupt the Manners, and eat out the Substance of all Religion. And therefore, ver. 23. he wills him to *avoid all foolish and unlearned Questions, knowing they do but gender Strife*, and beget nothing but Factions and Quarrels. And therefore having so good Reason and Authority for it, we may well enough say to all such busy and inquisitive Persons, that pry into things that belong not to them, as our Saviour did to St. *Peter*, *What is that to thee?*

3dly, This Discourse may rectify the Mistake about St. *John*'s Death; for from that Saying of our Saviour's, *What if I will that he tarry till I come*, there was a common Fame spread abroad, which obtain'd among the Antients, that he died not at all, but was translated. Others from that Report believ'd, that he only lay asleep in the Grave, and that he alone of all the Apostles was to live till Christ's second coming to Judgment. All which was without any foundation, for St. *John* himself (as was before observ'd) in recording that matter, declar'd the Sense of our Saviour to be otherwise; and the History of his Death in the days of *Trajan*, hath abundantly confuted that Mistake.

Lastly, St. *John*'s firm adhering to the Faith to the last gasp, may teach us Constancy and Perseverance in it to the end. No Menaces or Persecutions could shake his Belief, or scare him from publishing of the Gospel. Trials and Tribulations rather whetted than abated his Courage, and he was more animated than discourag'd by any earthly Opposition. Which should teach us to *hold fast the Profession*

fession of our Faith without wavering; knowing that if *we confess Christ here, he will confess us before his Father who is in Heaven.*

DISCOURSE XV.

The EPISTLE for the *Innocents* Day.

Rev. xiv. 1——5.

I look'd, and lo! a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion, *and with him an hundred and forty four thousand, having his Father's Name written on their Foreheads. And I heard a Voice from Heaven, as the Voice of many Waters,* &c.

THE High Festival of *Christmas* is attended with a numerous Train of Saints and Martyrs for its greater Solemnity; of some of which the Church has thought fit to preserve the Memory: as St. *Stephen*, St. *John*, and the holy *Innocents*; who following Christ to their Death, may fitly be remember'd at the Celebration of his Birth: None (as a Father hath observ'd) being more proper Attendants on Christ's Nativity, than the blessed Martyrs, who have laid down their Lives for him, from whose Birth they receiv'd a spiritual Life. And of these, the same Father hath observ'd three sorts.

The first sort is, of those that were Martyrs *both in Will and Deed*. Of this kind was St. *Stephen*, and many other of the Apostles, who not only in Will, but in Deed laid down their Lives for Christ.

The second sort, is of those that were Martyrs *in Will*, but not *in Deed*. Of this kind was St. *John*, who yielded himself to Death, when cast into the boiling Cauldron, and so was a Martyr in Will; but being by the good Providence of God preserv'd and deliver'd out of it, he was not so in Deed.

The third sort, is of those that were Martyrs *in Deed*, but not *in Will*. And this was the Case of those innocent Children that were slain by *Herod*, and so suffer'd *in Deed*;

but being Infants incapable of Knowledg and Choice, could not be ſo *in Will*. And yet theſe have been ever reckon'd among the Martyrs, becauſe they ſuffer'd for Chriſt; and a Day was appointed by the holy Fathers (as *Origen* tells us) to celebrate their Memory from that time in the Church of God, which Day hath been obſerv'd in the Chriſtian Church at this ſeaſon ever ſince.

The Collect for the Day minds us, how God out of the Mouths of Babes and Sucklings hath ordain'd Strength, and made Infants to glorify him by their Deaths. Theſe words were taken out of the eighth Pſalm, where the Pſalmiſt bleſſes God, who by the means of little Children promotes his own Glory, and by the Innocence of their Lives and Deaths perfecteth Praiſe; as our Saviour elſewhere does, ſaying, *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that thou haſt hid theſe things from the Wiſe and Prudent, and haſt reveal'd them unto Babes; even ſo Father, for ſo it ſeem'd good in thy ſight.* Mat. 11. 25, 26. Thence teaching us to pray, that God would *mortify and kill all Vices in us, and ſo ſtrengthen us with his Grace, that by the Innocency of our Lives and the Conſtancy of our Faith, even unto Death, we may glorify his holy Name, thro Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.*

The Epiſtle for the Day contains a Viſion of St. *John*'s, wherein, as in a Landskip, was repreſented to him ſomething of the Glories of Heaven, and the Felicities of a future State: of which, becauſe ſuffering Infants may be Partakers, as well as adult Perſons, they are appointed to be read on the Day of their Remembrance.

The Viſion hath in it many abſtruſe and obſcure Paſſages, which being hard to be underſtood, I ſhall not preſume to determine any thing poſitively about them; but only give you the beſt light into them that I can, from the Conjectures of Learned Men.

It begins thus: *I look'd, and lo! a Lamb ſtood on the Mount* Zion. Now this Lamb is ſuppos'd to be that *Lamb of God*, that was uſher'd in by St. *John*, to *take away the Sins of the World*; even the Son of God, our Bleſſed Saviour, *John* 1. 29, 36.

This *Lamb* is ſaid to be *ſlain before the Foundation of the World*, Rev. 13. 8. meaning, that God in his eternal Decree and Determination had appointed him as a Sacrifice to be offer'd up for the Sins of Mankind. Of this, *Abraham* foretold, ſaying unto *Iſaac*, *My Son, God will provide himſelf a Lamb for a Burnt-Offering*, Gen. 22. 8. which Lamb

was,

was, *according to the determinate Counſel and Foreknowledg of God, by wicked hands taken and ſlain*, Acts 2. 23. For theſe Sufferings, by which this Lamb of God took away the Sins of the World, and accompliſh'd the Work of Man's Salvation, he was highly advanc'd and rewarded. *He ſtood upon the Mount* Zion, having all Power in the Chriſtian Church, which is often expreſs'd in Scripture by *Zion* and *Jeruſalem*. In other places he is ſaid to *ſit upon the Throne at the Right Hand of God, with an hundred forty and four thouſand* round about him, *having the Father's Name written on their Foreheads*. By theſe are meant that numerous Train of Saints and Angels, that ſurround the Throne of God, ſinging Praiſes to him that ſitteth on the Throne, and to the Lamb for evermore. Of theſe we read more in the fifth Chapter of the *Revelation*, ver. 11, 12. where St. *John* tells us, *He beheld, and heard the Voice of many Angels round about the Throne, the number whereof was ten thouſand times ten thouſand, and thouſands of thouſands, ſaying with a loud Voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to receive Power, and Wiſdom, and Glory, and Bleſſing*. Among theſe may be ſuppos'd to be thoſe glorify'd Infants, that were murder'd and martyr'd for the ſake of Chriſt.

The *Greek* Church, in their Calendar, reckon them to the number of fourteen thouſand; to which may be added, other elect People of God, who being baptiz'd in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, are ſaid to *have the Father's Name written or ſign'd in their Foreheads*.

Moreover, in this Viſion, wherein he ſeems like St. *Paul* to be wrapt up into the third Heaven, *he heard a Voice from Heaven, as the Voice of many Waters, and as the Voice of a great Thunder*. By which may be meant the Shouts and Acclamations of glorify'd Saints, and juſt Men made perfect, which reſembled the murmuring Sound of flowing Streams and falling Waters, the Noiſe whereof ſeem'd ſometimes to break forth like a Clap of Thunder. Furthermore, *I heard* (ſaith he) *the Voice of Harpers harping with their Harps*: which may be underſtood of that heavenly Muſick made by the bleſſed Conſort of thoſe celeſtial Inhabitants; *ſinging as it were a new Song before the Throne, and before the four Beaſts and Elders*: meaning, the glorious Hallelujah ſung to the Lamb or Son of God, for taking away the Sins of the World. This is the new Song ſo often refer'd to by *David*, ſaying, *Sing unto the Lord a new Song, for he hath done marvellous things*. 'Tis that

triumphant *Epinicion*, or Song of Victory, ſounded forth by the Heavenly Hoſt for the Redemption of Mankind, who were *redeemed not with ſuch corruptible things as Silver and Gold, but with the precious Blood of Chriſt, as of a Lamb without blemiſh and without ſpot.* And this was *a Song, that no Man could learn, but the hundred forty and four thouſand, which were redeemed from the Earth.* For as none but they were concern'd in it, ſo none elſe could bear a part in that Celeſtial Choir. The Wicked and the Ungodly are not fitted to extol or glorify God; they are only the faithful and elect People of God, that are qualify'd to ſing forth his Praiſes.

After this, there follows a Deſcription of the bleſſed Inhabitants of the Heavenly Regions; who are here deſcrib'd,

1ſt, By their Purity: *Theſe are they which were not defil'd with Women, for they are Virgins.* This may be truly affirm'd of the innocent Children we commemorate this day, who being ſent out of the World almoſt as ſoon as they came into it, eſcap'd all the Defilements of the Fleſh, and were pure from the Pollutions of the World; they were taken away in their Virgin State, and died without the Impurity of ſinful Luſts; and ſo were (as St. *Paul* wiſh'd in the behalf of the *Corinthians*) *preſented as chaſte Virgins unto Chriſt*, 2 Cor. 11. 2. The like may be affirm'd of all truly regenerated Chriſtians, whoſe Souls being waſh'd in the Blood of that immaculate Lamb that was ſlain to purge away the Sins of the World, are preſented pure and without ſpot before God by Jeſus Chriſt; and ſo become Inhabitants of theſe undefiled Manſions: who are deſcrib'd, as by their Purity, ſo,

2dly, By their Piety, manifeſted by a holy Imitation of their Saviour, expreſs'd in theſe words; *Theſe are they that follow the Lamb whitherſoever he goeth:* meaning, that they follow the Direction of Chriſt's Doctrine, and the Guidance of his Example. His faithful Servants will be Followers of him as dear Children, and tread in the ſteps that he hath chalk'd out for them. They will follow the Example of his Patience, Humility, and Condeſcenſion for the Good of Mankind, and think it their Glory as well as their Duty, to imitate and come as near him as they can. The Expreſſion here of following the Lamb *whitherſoever he goeth*, implies the following of him, as well in the rough and miry Ways of Perſecution and Adverſity, as in

the

the ſmoother Paths of Pleaſure and Proſperity: and ſo indeed we muſt, following him in Self-denial, and taking up the Croſs, if we mean to follow him to Heaven, and there receive from him a Crown.

3*dly*, Theſe Heavenly **Inhabitants** are farther deſcrib'd by their great Privileges and Advantages above others; for they are ſaid to be *redeemed from among Men, being the Firſt-fruits unto God, and to the Lamb*: that is, they were reſcu'd from the Sins and Puniſhments of that wicked Age, having a part in the firſt Reſurrection, and over them the ſecond Death hath no power; *Rev.* 20. 5.

Laſtly, They are deſcrib'd by the Innocency and Integrity of their Lives; for *in their mouth was found no Guile, for they were without fault before the Throne of God.* Such were thoſe innocent Babes, whoſe Murder and Martyrdom we remember this day. There was no Falſhood or Hypocriſy in their Hearts or Tongues, who having committed no actual Sin, were without fault and blameleſs before God. And ſuch are all penitent and ſincere Chriſtians, whoſe Sins being done away by his Mercy, appear innocent and righteous in God's ſight.

Thus I have given the beſt Light I can into the dark and obſcure Paſſages of this Day's Epiſtle: in which we have,

(1.) A Glimpſe or imperfect Repreſentation of the future Joys and Glories of Heaven; which are enough to quicken our Appetite and Deſires after them, tho not to ſatisfy our Curioſity about them. *It doth not yet appear* (ſaith St. *John*) *what we ſhall be*; for Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, nor hath it enter'd into the Heart of Man to conceive what great things God hath laid up for them that love and fear him: only we know that we ſhall be *like him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is.* We ſhall live for ever in his preſence, and be raviſh'd with the unceſſant Praiſes and Hallelujahs ſung to him that ſitteth on the Throne, and to the Lamb for evermore: which things we are rather to admire and prepare for, than to pry too much into ſuch unſearchable and unreveal'd Myſteries.

(2.) We learn from this Diſcourſe, the Qualifications of the Perſons that will be receiv'd into thoſe unſpeakable Joys. And they are ſuch as are pure in Heart, and keep themſelves unſpotted from the World; for Heaven is the Manſion of Peace and Purity, where no Diſcord or De-

filement enters. They that are admitted there, are deſcrib'd in the Viſion to be ſuch as *were not defil'd with Women*, nor corrupted by ſtrange Fleſh, but have kept their Veſſels in Sanctification and Honour, and not in the Luſts of Uncleanneſs.

Again, They are ſuch as are true Followers of Chriſt, and *follow the Lamb wherever he goes*; not declining the Ways of Vertue for any Difficulties they meet with in them, but being faithful unto Death, and reſiſting even unto Blood, ſtriving againſt Sin. By thus paſſing through the World with Innocence and Patience, we ſhall arrive at laſt to the undefiled Regions of Bliſs and Glory.

DISCOURSE XVI.

The GOSPEL for the *Innocents* Day.

St. Matthew ii. 13—19.

The Angel of the Lord appeared to Joſeph *in a Dream, ſaying, Ariſe, and take the young Child, and his Mother, and flee into* Egypt; *and be thou there until I bring thee word, for* Herod *will ſeek the young Child to deſtroy him. When he aroſe, and took the young Child and his Mother by night, and departed into* Egypt, *and was there until the Death of* Herod, *&c.*

THIS Goſpel for the Day acquaints us with the Manner of our Saviour's Preſervation from the ambitious Rage and Cruelty of *Herod*; who fearing the ſhaking of his Throne by the Birth of a new-born King, ſought to ſlay him in his Infancy, to ſecure himſelf in the Kingdom. How he eſcap'd this intended Murder, is the Deſign of the enſuing Words to declare.

They begin thus; *The Angel of the Lord appeared to* Joſeph *in a Dream.* The Appearances of Angels in Dreams and Viſions, to deliver Meſſages, were frequent in thoſe times upon ſome great and weighty Occaſions. Thus Joſeph

Joseph was warned of God, by an *Angel's appearing to him in a Dream, to take unto him* Mary *his Wife*, Mat. 1. 20. An Angel likewise appear'd to the Virgin *Mary*, to let her know, that *she should conceive and bring forth a Son, and call his Name Jesus*; Luke 1. 28, 29. The Wise-men that came from the East to see and worship the new-born King of the *Jews*, were *warned by God in a Dream to return into their own Country another way*, Mat. 2. 12. After whose Departure, *the Angel of the Lord appeared again to* Joseph *in a Dream, saying unto him, Arise, and take the young Child and his Mother, and flee into* Egypt, *and tarry there till the Death of* Herod. The reason whereof is added, because *Herod* alarm'd with the Inquiry of the Wise-men from the East, saying, *Where is he that is born King of the* Jews? and jealous of the Loss of his Kingdom by the Birth of a Rival King, design'd to destroy him to prevent the Danger: which thing he first attempted to do by Craft and Subtilty, seeking an opportunity to dispatch him under a pretence of worshipping him; of which, see more in the Gospel for the *Epiphany*. But being disappointed of that Design, he labours to do that by Violence and open Force, which he could not compass by secret Policy: to which end, he order'd *all the Children that were in* Bethlehem, *and in all the Coasts thereof, to be put to death, from two Years old and under*; hoping among the rest to be rid of this new-born King. And to make sure work of it, he spared not his own Son from the Massacre; which made *Augustus*, upon hearing of it, say, *Melius est Herodis porcum esse quam filium*; 'twas better to be *Herod*'s Swine than Son: for being a *Jew*, he prohibited the killing of Swine, but made no scruple of destroying his Son. An Account of this Cruelty of *Herod* to his own and the *Bethlemite* Children, we have from *Macrobius*, with sharp Reflections on this bloody Tragedy, *Lib. Saturn.* 1.

But how was the Son of God, our Saviour, preserv'd from this intended Slaughter? Why, this was done by God Almighty's ordering *Joseph*, by the ministration of an Angel, to secure the holy Child Jesus and his Mother by a speedy flight into *Egypt*; which he immediately did, departing in the night, to lose no time, and to prevent discovery: where he remain'd, according to Order, till the Death of *Herod*.

And here some have observ'd the Difficulty of this Journy, how he was not commanded into a neighbouring Vil-

lage, or to his own Country *Galilee*, but remov'd into a far Country, above two hundred miles diſtant from home or any of his Friends, through a vaſt Deſart in a cold Seaſon, with a Child not above ſix Weeks old, unto a ſtrange People of another Language, uncertain how long he ſhould ſtay, and what Entertainment he ſhould meet with. Which Command of God to *Joſeph* was like that to *Abraham*, Gen. 12. 1. *Get thee out of thy Country, and from thy Kindred, and from thy Father's Houſe, unto a Land which I ſhall ſhew thee: And I will bleſs thee, and in thy Seed ſhall the Nations of the Earth be bleſſed.* Now neither was *Abraham* nor *Joſeph* diſobedient to the heavenly Viſion, but both without any diſputing readily obey'd the Command of their Maker; for *Abraham preſently departed, as the Lord had ſpoken unto him*, ver. 4. which the Apoſtle aſcribes to the Strength of his Faith, *Heb.* 11. 8. *By Faith* Abraham, *when he was call'd to go out into a Land which he ſhould after receive for an Inheritance, obey'd; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.*

By the ſame Truſt and Confidence in God, *Joſeph*, upon the Meſſage of the Angel, *aroſe, and took the young Child and his Mother, and departed where he was directed*, viz. *into* Egypt, *and was there until the Death of* Herod.

What Hardſhips he met with in his Journy, and what Uſage he found there, the Scripture being ſilent, it will be too curious for us to inquire. At his Arrival there, he is ſuppos'd to reſide in or near the City call'd *Heliopolis*; where the holy Child Jeſus being carry'd into the Temple, the Statues and Idols were ſaid to fall down at his preſence, like *Dagon* at the Approach of the Ark: wherein was fulfill'd that Prophecy of *Iſaiah*, Chap. 19. 1. *Behold! the Lord ſhall come into* Egypt, *and the Idols of* Egypt *ſhall be moved at his Preſence.* The Abode or Reſidence of thoſe holy Perſons in *Egypt*, bleſs'd that heatheniſh and idolatrous Country with many ſignal Bleſſings, of which the Prophet in that Chapter gives ſome particular Account. In the beginning, he tells them what Confuſions ſhould happen among them by reaſon of their Idolatries, that *the Heart of* Egypt *ſhould melt in the midſt of it*; that their Courage ſhould fail, and their Counſels be infatuated by falling out and fighting with one another. All which would make way for, and end in their Deliverance; for God would *ſend them a Saviour, a Great one, and he ſhould deliver them*; ver. 20. *Then ſhould* Egypt *ſpeak the Language of* Canaan,

and

and ſwear to the Lord of Hoſts; ver. 18. *In that day there ſhall be an Altar to the Lord in the midſt of the Land of* Egypt, *and Sacrifices and Oblations offer'd thereon*; ver. 19. *And the Lord ſhall be known in* Egypt, *and a Bleſſing ſhall be in the midſt of the Land.* And for a cloſe they are told, *That the Lord of Hoſts ſhall bleſs them, ſaying, Bleſſed be* Egypt *my People, and* Iſrael *mine Inheritance.* Theſe things foretold by the Prophet, were after fulfill'd by this Son of God: of which, 'tis ſuppos'd, they had the News brought and confirm'd to them by theſe holy Perſons.

But how or when did they return out of *Egypt?* Why, the Angel that warn'd them to go and tarry in *Egypt* till the Death of *Herod*, did likewiſe bring them word of *Herod's* Death, and order'd them to return, as we read in the 19th, 20th, and 21ſt Verſes of this Chapter; where we are told, that *when* Herod *was dead, behold an Angel of the Lord appear'd to* Joſeph *in a Dream in* Egypt, *ſaying, Ariſe, and take the young Child and his Mother, and go into the Land of* Iſrael, *for they are dead who ſought the young Child's Life. And he aroſe, and took the young Child and his Mother, and came into the Land of* Iſrael. And this was done, as the Goſpel for this Day tells us, *that it might be fulfill'd which was ſpoken of the Lord by the Prophet, ſaying, Out of* Egypt *have I call'd my Son.* Which words are quoted out of *Hoſea*, Chap. 11. 1. *When* Iſrael *was a Child, then I loved him, and call'd my Son out of* Egypt. Which Saying was literally ſpoken of *Iſrael*, but myſtically of Chriſt; both which were beloved of him, and call'd by him out of *Egypt.* For as *Pharaoh* commanded all the Male Children of the *Hebrews* to be ſlain as ſoon as they were born, thinking thereby to deſtroy God's firſt-born *Iſrael*; ſo *Herod* appointed all the young Children of the *Bethlemites* to be murder'd in their Infancy, hoping thereby to deſtroy the new-born King of *Iſrael.* But God in his good Providence preſerv'd both, and thereby diſappointed the bloody Deſigns of each: for as God by the Death of *Pharaoh* deliver'd *Iſrael* with a high hand out of *Egypt*, ſo did he by the Death of *Herod* call his Son out of the ſame place.

Now the Cruelty of *Herod* towards theſe tender Infants, with the occaſion of it, is ſet forth in the following words; *Then* Herod, *when he ſaw that he was mocked of the Wiſemen, was exceeding wroth:* that is, when he fail'd of his Expectation of ſeeing them in their way home, by their returning another way, and thereby loſt the opportunity of

exe-

executing his wicked Purpoſe, he was fill'd with Rage, and preſently *ſent forth and ſlew all the Children that were in* Bethlehem *from two Years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the Wiſe-men*: meaning the time of Chriſt's Birth, or computing his Age as he learnt from the *Magi* or Wiſe-men that came to worſhip him, which he calculated to be under two Years old, and therefore immediately gave order for the Slaughter of all the Children in *Bethlehem* of that Age, thinking thereby to include this new-born King in the bloody Execution, and ſo to be rid of the Fears of any Competitor. A Cruelty ſurpaſſing all Belief, had not *Herod* been the Actor, famous for killing his own Children, and murdering all that ſtood in his way. By which we ſee to what height of Cruelty, Ambition edg'd on with Rage and Jealouſy may lead Men; and how little Regard or Remorſe it hath, for ſhedding the moſt innocent Blood.

But how did the *Bethlemites*, both Men and Women, take this inhuman Slaughter of their little Children? Why, no doubt, with great Grief and Lamentation: yea, the Cry and Lamentation, eſpecially of the poor Mothers, ſo ſuddenly bereft of their dear Children, was ſo great, that, as we are here told, *then was fulfilled that which was ſpoken by* Jeremy *the Prophet, ſaying, In* Rama *was a Voice heard, Lamentation, and Weeping, and great Mourning*; Rachel *weeping for her Children, and would not be comforted, becauſe they are not*. *Rama* was a chief Town belonging to the Tribe of *Benjamin*, which was of *Rachel*'s Family; and her weeping for her Children, was for their being carry'd away from her into Captivity, and ſo were not with her; of which we read, *Jer.* 31. 15. And this was a Tyye of the Murder of theſe innocent Children in *Bethlehem*, in or near which *Rachel* was bury'd.

But what became of *Herod* after this inhuman Butchery? Why, Hiſtory tells us, that he died a miſerable and untimely Death, ſmitten with ſundry Plagues and Tortures both in Body and Mind; God avenging his Cruelty to thoſe poor Innocents, by turning it upon himſelf, his inward Parts ſcorch'd with a burning Fever, his outward Parts afflicted with Boils and Ulcers, together with great Convulſions and Torments in both; as *Joſephus* relates more at large, *Lib.* 17. *cap.* 8.

This was the wretched End of this mercileſs Tyrant, who was eaten up with Worms, leaving a Brand of Infamy upon

upon his Name, and Trouble to his Posterity. Whereas these holy Innocents have been ever since remember'd with Honour, and rewarded with a Crown of Martyrdom.

Thus we see the Drift of this Gospel, and the Design of this Festival; from both which, we may learn many useful Lessons: As,

1*st*, From *Herod*'s Cruelty in destroying those holy Babes, we learn, that Innocence is not always a sufficient Protection from the Rage and Fury of bloody Men; for these harmless Infants had never committed any actual Sin, nor harbour'd any evil Design against any: and if Innocence could have saved them, they had escap'd the doleful Massacre; but this rather expos'd than protected them from the Fury of the Tyrant.

2*dly*, We may learn from hence, that Sufferings are not always Arguments of Guilt in those that undergo them; for we see here, that innocent Children may be made a Sacrifice to the Ambition of wicked Men: and therefore such Sufferings are rather Tokens of God's Favour, than Marks of his Displeasure; for these Infants were honour'd and crown'd for their Sufferings, and many a Man hath ow'd his Happiness to his Afflictions. Which may teach us,

3*dly*, That whatever Afflictions or Oppression Innocence may meet with from the hands of Men, it will be sure to be rewarded by the hand of God. He who makes all things work together for good to his dear Children, hath plac'd the Cross in the way to a Crown, and order'd that by many Tribulations we are to arrive to and enter into the Kingdom of God.

4*thly*, From *Herod*'s pretending to worship our Saviour to have an opportunity to destroy him, we may learn, that Religion is too often used as an Instrument to serve Mens ambitious and worldly Designs; which should warn good Men not to be too easily impos'd upon by such Pretences.

5*thly*, From God's warning of *Joseph* to arise, and take his young Son and his Mother, and flee into *Egypt*, to escape the Fury of *Herod*, we learn the watchful Care of Divine Providence for the Security and Preservation of his People. God is a strong Tower of Defence to them that put their trust in him, and his Providence is a sure Refuge to flee to in times of Trouble. And *who shall harm you* (saith the Apostle) *if ye are Followers of that which is good?* Moreover,

6*thly*,

6thly, From God's rewarding these holy Innocents, and listing them in the Number and Blessedness of Martyrs, we may learn to part with our dearest Children, and nearest Pledges of our selves, at God's Call, and in his Cause. We may not murmur or repine, but readily resign them up, when they may become Instruments of God's Glory, and thereby promote their own Happiness: *Suffer little Children to come unto me* (saith Christ) *and forbid them not, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* They can be no Losers by God's taking them from us, when he takes them to himself; and therefore we should rather mind the Goodness of God, than mourn or murmur at such Dispensations; saying with holy *Job*, upon the loss of all his Children, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the Name of the Lord.*

Lastly, Let us learn from hence to *become as little Children*, in the Frame and Temper of our Minds; without which, our Saviour tells us, *we cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, Mat. 18. 3. Let us imitate them in their Innocency by a harmless and inoffensive Conversation; for they neither think nor do any evil.

Let us learn of them Humility and Lowliness of Mind; for they are neither lifted up with their own, nor envy at any others Condition. Again,

Let us imitate them in their Submission to the Will of God and intire Dependence upon him; for as they have no Will of their own, but are wholly guided by the Will of God both in doing and suffering, so let us upon all occasions say, *Father, not my Will, but thine be done.*

Finally, Let us imitate them in their Contempt of the World; for as no ambitious or worldly Designs enter into the Minds of Children, so 'twere well if ours were as free from them. In short, as they glorify'd God by their Deaths, so let us do by our Lives.

DISCOURSE XVII.

The EPISTLE for the Sunday after *Chriſtmas*-Day.

Gal. iv. 1——7.

Now I ſay, that the Heir, as long as he is a Child, differeth nothing from a Servant, tho he be Lord of all: But is under Tutors and Governours, until the Time appointed of the Father. Even ſo we, when we were Children, were in Bondage under the Elements of the World: But when the Fulneſs of Time was come, God ſent forth his Son made of a Woman, &c.

THE great Feaſt of our Saviour's Nativity, hath not only ſome Days to go before and prepare for it, but likewiſe ſome to follow after it, to attend and adorn that great Solemnity. Accordingly, this Day being the firſt Sunday after *Chriſtmas*, hath the ſame Collect to celebrate the Mercy, and to continue the Memory of it.

The Epiſtle and Goſpel likewiſe treat of the ſame Subject; the Birth of Chriſt: the one ſhewing us the Time, the other the Manner of it.

As for the Time, the beginning of the Epiſtle for this Day tells us, that the Church was for ſome time in its Infancy or Childhood; during which time it was in Bondage under the Elements of the World, till in the Fulneſs of Time it was ſet free by the Birth of a Saviour.

Now I ſay (ſaith the Apoſtle) Ver. 1, 2. *that the Heir as long as he is a Child, differeth nothing from a Servant, tho he be Lord of all: but is under Tutors and Governours, till the Time appointed of the Father.* Even ſo the Church, during its Minority, tho Heir of all the Promiſes, and Lord of all the Bleſſings contain'd in them, was yet as a Servant under the Power and Pupilage of the Law, and to be train'd

up

up under the beggarly Rites and Rudiments of it; till he, who was the Subſtance of all thoſe Types and Shadows, ſhould come, to ſet it in a higher Form, by the more ſpiritual and manly Inſtitutions of the Goſpel. And

When that Fulneſs of Time was come, God ſent forth his Son, made of a Woman, made under the Law. Where by *the Fulneſs of Time*, we are to underſtand that happy Period, when the Date of all the Promiſes and Prophecies of the Meſſias was expir'd and run out: for if we look back even to the firſt Foundation of the World, we ſhall find very early Notices given of this Divine Perſon, which in the ſucceſſive Ages of the World, were renew'd and improv'd into clearer Revelations of him.

He was promis'd to *Adam* in Paradiſe, immediately after the Fall, *Gen.* 3. 15.

And ſome hundreds of Years after, to *Abraham*, *Gen.* 12. 3.

After that to *Moſes*, *Deut.* 18. 15. then to *Jacob*, Gen. 49. 10.

In farther Proceſs of Time, the Prophets gave fuller and plainer Revelations of him, the Light of Prophecy ſhining more and more unto the perfect Day of his actual Appearance.

The Prophet *Iſaiah* declar'd the Perſon, of whom he ſhould be born; *Iſa.* 7. 14.

The Prophet *Micah* foretold the Place of his Nativity, *Mic.* 5. 2.

The Prophet *Daniel* fix'd the Time and Period of his Coming, *Dan.* 9. 24.

The Prophet *Haggai*, at the Building of the ſecond Temple, declar'd, that the *Deſire of all Nations ſhould come, and fill that Houſe with his Glory*; Hag. 2. 7. And the Prophet *Malachi*, the laſt of the Prophets; that *the Lord whom they ſought, ſhould ſuddenly come to his Temple*; Mal. 3. 1.

Now, when the Date of all theſe Predictions was run out, and the Meaſure of Time appointed for his Coming was filled up; then was the Fulneſs of Time, which happen'd to fall in exactly with the Time of his Appearance, the happy Seaſon we now commemorate.

For at this Fulneſs of Time, the Apoſtle here tells us, *God ſent forth his Son.* He was, at that time, earneſtly expected both by *Jews* and *Gentiles*; the Queſtion in every one's Mouth then was, *Where is he that ſhould be born? And is this he that ſhould come?* They were at it at every turn, which ſhews, they were all in a general Expectation

of

of him, tho they differ'd about the Way and Manner of his Coming.

The *Jews*, who look'd for a glorious and splendid Messiah, were gazing upward, to see in what quarter of the Heavens this *Sun of Righteousness* would arise, and how they might be ready to receive him with Shouts and Acclamations of Joy.

Others, who had better studied and understood the Prophets, were looking about to see in what Part of the Earth this *Branch of the Root of Jesse* would spring up. But while the World was thus intent, and upon the Rack of Expectation, the Angel *Gabriel* was sent from Heaven to the Virgin *Mary*, to let her know, that she was to be the Mother of this great Person; and that how strange and incredible soever the News might seem to her, yet he who sent her this Message was abundantly able, and would in due time certainly bring it to pass; which she in a little time after, to the great Joy and Wonder of the World, found punctually accomplish'd: for shortly after we read *she brought forth her first-born Son*, who was the first and only-begotten Son of God, *Luke* 2. 7. And this is what is here affirm'd by the Apostle, that *in the Fulness of Time God sent forth his Son*. And likewise verifies what follows,

That he was *made of a Woman*: he who made the World, and all things in it, was pleas'd to condescend so low, as to be made of a Woman; and tho he was begotten of the Father before all Time, yet in the Fulness of Time he admitted another, and far inferiour Generation, *viz.* to be born as we are.

The first Promise of him stil'd him, *The Seed of a Woman*, Gen. 3. 15. The next, *The Seed of* Abraham, *Gen.* 12. 3. And after that, the Offspring of *a Virgin*, Isa. 9. 7. All which Prophecies were fulfill'd in his being conceiv'd and born of the Virgin *Mary*; which made her say in her *Magnificat*, that *the Lord had regarded the low Estate of his Hand-maiden*; and that *in delivering Man he did not abhor the Virgin's Womb*; Luke 2. 47. There it was that the *Word was made Flesh*, being conceived of her very Substance: and there our Human Nature, by an ineffable Union, was conjoin'd with the Divine in the same Person.

This is a Mystery fraught with nothing but Miracles and Wonder, that the Divine and Human Nature should be so united, as neither to swallow up or pollute each other; that the Son of God should not take upon him the Nature

of

of Angels, or come in the Form of a Seraphim, but should appear in the Likeneſs of ſinful Fleſh, and come in the Form of a Servant; that he who was before all Time, ſhould vouchſafe to be born, and to make his Way into the World thro a Virgin's Womb; that Eternity ſhould begin to be, and the only-begotten Son of God become the Offspring of a Woman; and ſhe one who was a Mother, that knew no Man, that had a Son without any Father upon Earth, and a Child that was free from the Taint and Contagion of all Mankind. In a word, here is an Infant, born in an Inn, wrap'd in Swadling-Clothes, and laid in a Manger; and yet ador'd by Kings, worſhipped by Angels, believ'd on in the World, and receiv'd up into Glory. Theſe, and many more than can be expreſs'd, are the aſtoniſhing Wonders and Miracles of the Incarnation; which are not to be comprehended at preſent, but are reſerv'd for the Object of our eternal Praiſes and Admiration.

Next to his being *made of a Woman*, 'tis here affirm'd, that he *was made under the Law*; whereby he not only took our Nature, but our Debt upon him; and this was neceſſary too in order to our Salvation: for if he had only taken our Nature, and not our Debt to Divine Juſtice, he could never have been our Surety, nor ſatisfy'd the Law for us. The Law could not have taken hold of him, being not under it; for *whatſoever the Law ſpeaks, it ſpeaks to them that are under the Law*: And therefore as he was made of a Woman to take our Nature, ſo was he made under the Law to take our Obligation upon him; otherwiſe, tho he might be made like us, yet we could never be made like him: but by doing both, he is become our all-ſufficient Surety and Saviour.

But how, or when was the Son of God thus made under the Law? Why, this was done partly at his Nativity; at which time being deſcended from the Stock of the *Jews*, he became liable by Birth to the Law under which he was born. Hence the Apoſtle tells us, that *being found in Faſhion as a Man, he became obedient to the Law of Death*; the one being a neceſſary Conſequent of the other, *Phil.* 2. 8.

But this was chiefly done at his Circumciſion, when by taking in his Fleſh that Sign and Seal of the Covenant made with *Abraham*, he became a Debtor to fulfil the whole Law: So St. *Paul* teſtifies, Gal. 5. 3. *I* Paul *teſtify unto you, that every Man that is circumciſed, is thereby a Debtor*

to

to do the whole Law. This Debt that lay upon us, Chriſt as our Pledge or Surety undertook to ſatisfy, and by his active and paſſive Obedience paid to the utmoſt Farthing.

And this will lead me to conſider the Ends for which the Son of God was thus made of a Woman, and made under the Law. And they (as the next words declare) were *to redeem them that were under the Law*, and *that we might receive the Adoption of Sons.* Redemption and Adoption are the two great Privileges obtain'd for us by Chriſt's Satisfaction: by the one, we are reſcu'd from the Bondage of the Law; by the other, we are reſtor'd to the Liberty of Sons: both which being high and invaluable Privileges, will deſerve to be conſider'd.

And, *1ſt*, one great End and Privilege of Chriſt's being made under the Law, is, *to redeem them that were under the Law.* Redemption evermore ſuppoſes a Sale or Alienation going before it: and to redeem, ſignifies the buying or bringing back of ſomething that was before made away or alien'd. Thus when any thing that was ſold or made away as a Pledge or a Pawn, is regain'd or brought back again, 'tis ſaid to be redeem'd; and this relates to Perſons as well as Things. Thus when any Perſon that was ſold or carry'd away Captive is retaken or ranſom'd, he is likewiſe ſaid to be redeem'd; but ſtill a former Sale or Alienation muſt be ſuppos'd to go before. And this repreſents to us the natural and forlorn Eſtate of Mankind, who were all *ſold under Sin*; our Natures were alien'd from God in *Adam*, and the firſt Tranſgreſſion brought us under the heavy Doom and Sentence of the Law, which we could neither ſatisfy nor remove; for *as many as are under the Law are under the Curſe, as it is written, Curſed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them:* Gal. 3. 10.

In this deplorable Caſe the Son of God was pleas'd to interpoſe and undertake for our Redemption, by laying down a Price and valuable Conſideration for it: and becauſe neither Silver or Gold, nor any corruptible thing had Worth enough to redeem the Soul, he made his Soul an Offering for Sin, and ſhed his own Blood to ſave ours. Becauſe *the Soul that ſinneth muſt die*, and the ſame Nature that had offended was to make Satisfaction, he therefore took our Nature that he might pay our Debt, and as our Surety

Put himself under the Law, to release and quit us from the Punishment of it: by this means *he hath redeemed us from the Curse of the Law, being made a Curse for us*; and by reconciling us unto God, *hath blotted out the Hand-writing that was against us.* So that now we may appeal from the Rigour and Sentence of the Law, to the Grace and Favour of the Gospel; for how loudly soever the Law may thunder out Terror and a Curse, it speaks only to them that are under the Law; whereas we being redeem'd from it, are now no longer *under the Law, but under Grace.* Neither hath he redeemed us only from the Curse of the Moral Law, but from the Yoke of the Ceremonial Law; which St. *Peter* says, was *too heavy for the Necks of our Fore-fathers to bear*, Acts 15. 10. By his being circumcised he became obedient to that Law likewise, and thereby freed us from the painful Rite of Circumcision, and other costly and cumbersome Sacrifices enjoin'd by it; and by both, hath wrought out perfect Redemption for us, the first End of his being made under the Law.

The Second is, *that we might receive the Adoption of Sons*; that is, that we who were *Gentiles*, and so Strangers and Enemies unto God, might be made Sons, and taken into the Adoption of Children. The time was, when the *Jews* were the only People of God; for *to them appertain'd the Adoption, the Glory, the giving of the Law, and the Promises*, Rom. 9. 4, 5. They were the only Darlings of the Divine Care and Providence, whilst the *Gentiles*, like so many Out-casts, were excluded by a Partition-Wall from the Service and the Privileges of the Temple. The Apostle stiles these *Aliens from the Commonwealth of* Israel, *and Strangers to the Covenant of Promise*; Ephes. 2. 12, 13. But our Blessed Saviour, by being made of a Woman, and made under the Law, hath broken this Enclosure, and made us all one in Christ Jesus; insomuch, that we *Gentiles* who were *afar off and Enemies by evil Works, are now brought nigh by the Blood of his Cross*; and from Aliens and Out-casts, become the adopted Sons and Children of God.

And because ye are Sons (saith the Apostle in the next words) *God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your Hearts, crying, Abba, Father:* that is, to confirm you in the Truth of his Sonship; God the Father hath communicated to us the Spirit of his Son, and thereby enabled us to call God Father, and to address to him as *his Father and our Father, as his God and our God*; John 20. 17. We

may now come to him with the Boldneſs and Confidence of Children, ſeeing he bears to us the Bowels of a Father, and thoſe too infinitely more tender and compaſſionate than thoſe of any earthly Parent. Hence we are told, that the Spirit here given us, is not *a Spirit of Bondage again to fear, but a Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

Wherefore (as the Apoſtle goes on) *thou art no more a Servant, but a Son.* We are no longer to look upon our ſelves as Perſons in a ſervile Condition, under a ſevere and tyrannical Maſter, and ſo doing all things as Slaves merely for fear of the Rod and the Laſh; but to reckon our ſelves in the Condition of Sons, under a loving and indulgent Father, and ſo doing all things from a Principle of Love, and paying him a free, honourable, and ingenuous Service, taking delight in our Work, being well aſſured of ample and honourable Wages. For

If a Son, then an Heir of God through Chriſt. The Son you know is always Heir to his Father, a Natural Son by Birth-right; and ſo Chriſt is ſaid to be *Heir of all things*, an adopted Son by Favour and Courteſy: and ſo we are made *Heirs of God, and Joint-Heirs with Jeſus Chriſt*, Rom. 8. 17. And that not to a periſhing Eſtate or a fading Kingdom, but to an *Inheritance immortal, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reſerved in Heaven for us:* to which we *are born of incorruptible Seed,* and *begotten again to a lively Hope, by the Reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt*; 1 Pet. 1. 3, 4, 23. And tho no other Heir would hear of adopting Strangers into his Family, and much leſs of dividing the Inheritance with them; yet Chriſt, the Heir of all things, is pleas'd to admit us as *Joint-Heirs* with himſelf, and to *make us meet Partakers with him, of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light.* The ſum of all then is this: The Son of God was made of a Woman, that he might be like us; and was made under the Law, that we might be like him: that is, he became the Son of Man, that we might be made the Sons of God; and partook of our Human Nature, to make us partakers of the Divine. This is the Drift or Scope of this Day's Epiſtle: From whence we may learn,

Firſt, To magnify and adore the infinite Love and Condeſcenſion of our Saviour to Mankind, that the Maker of all Things ſhould, for our ſake, vouchſafe to be made himſelf, and that not only of a Woman, but under the Law too; that he who gave Laws to the World, ſhould

ſubject himſelf to a Law of his own making, and undergo the utmoſt Rigour and Severity of it, merely to deliver us from the Curſe and Puniſhment of it: This is a Mercy never enough to be acknowledg'd or admir'd, and may juſtly make us ſay with holy *David*, *What ſhall I render unto the Lord for all his Benefits?* Such wonderful Condeſcenſion ſhould fill our Hearts with Thankfulneſs, and our Mouths with the Praiſes of our Maker. And ſince all that we can ſay or do muſt fall infinitely ſhort of this unparallel'd Love, we ſhould cry out with the Pſalmiſt; *Lord, what is Man that thou art ſo mindful of him, or the Son of Man that thou ſo regardeſt him?*

Secondly, Chriſt redeeming us from the Sentence and Severity of the Moral as well as the burdenſom Yoke of the Ceremonial Law, ſhould teach us the more hearty and chearful Obedience to him; for hereby he hath verified his own ſaying, that *his Yoke is eaſy, and his Burden is light.* He hath taken off all the Rigour and Hardſhip of it, and put ſuch a Sweetneſs and Comfort into it, that renders his Yoke rather an eaſe than a clog, and his Burden not only light, but delightſom: So the Pſalmiſt aſſures us, *Great Peace have all they that keep thy Law, and nothing ſhall offend them.* And elſewhere, *In keeping thy Commandments there is great Reward.* Yea, the Son of God hath not only freed us from the Curſe of the Law, but intitled us to all the Bleſſings contain'd and promiſed in it; by which means he hath brought over the Law to our ſide, and that which before writ bitter things againſt us, now ſpeaks nothing but Peace and Comfort to us. Which ſhould teach us to delight in God's Law, and to run with chearfulneſs the Paths of his Commandments.

Laſtly, Chriſt's receiving us into the Adoption of Sons, may teach us all filial Love and Duty to him, and to behave our ſelves as becometh the Sons and Children of God; acting ſuitably to ſo great a Privilege, and doing nothing unworthy of ſo high a Relation. As God beareth towards us the Bowels of a Father, ſo let us bear towards him the Duty of Children: *A Son honoureth his Father, and a Servant his Maſter.* And we find God Almighty juſtly claiming the Duty of both; *If I am a Father, where is my Honour; if a Maſter, where is my Fear? ſaith the Lord of Hoſts*, Mal. 1. 6. Moreover, Children you know are to obey their Parents, to hearken to their Counſels, to receive their Reproofs and Admonitions, and to ſubmit to their

Correc-

Corrections; how much more ought we to do all this to our Father in Heaven? *We have had Fathers of the Fleſh* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *and they corrected us, and we did them Reverence; ſhall we not rather be in ſubjection to the Father of Spirits, and live? for they, verily, for a few Days chaſten'd us for their own Pleaſure, but he for our Profit, that we may be partakers of his Holineſs.* Heb. 12. 9, 10. Once more, Children are wont to truſt and rely upon their Parents, and to caſt themſelves upon their Care and Proviſion for them; this we ſhould much more do on our heavenly Father, who knoweth we have need of theſe things. In a word, we muſt endeavour to pleaſe him in all things, and to avoid whatever may offend him, ſo ſhall we receive the Inheritance of Sons, and hear that happy Sentence, *Come ye bleſſed Children of my Father, inherit the Kingdom*, &c.

DISCOURSE XVIII.

The GOSPEL for the Sunday after *Chriſtmas* Day.

St. Matthew i. 18, to the end.

Now the Birth of Jeſus Chriſt was on this wiſe; Whenas his Mother Mary *was eſpous'd to* Joſeph, *before they came together, ſhe was found with Child of the Holy Ghoſt. Then* Joſeph *her Huſband, being a juſt Man*, &c.

THE Epiſtle for this Day ſhew'd us the Time and End of Chriſt's Birth, which was in the Fulneſs of Time, and for the Redemption of Mankind. The Goſpel ſhews us the Manner and Circumſtances of his Birth, which were ſtrange and miraculous, as the Sequel of this Diſcourſe will diſcover. It begins with the Narration of it; ſaying, *The Birth of Jeſus Chriſt was on this wiſe*: which being extraordinary and beſide the common Courſe of Generation, deſerves to be related and remember'd too to all Poſterities for evermore. The relation of it begins thus; *Whenas his Mother* Mary *was eſpous'd to* Joſeph, *before they*

came together, she was found with Child of the Holy Ghost. Where we may observe,

First, That his Mother *Mary* was one of a low and mean Condition; which made her say, that *God regarded the low Estate of his Hand-maiden.* And *Joseph* to whom she was espous'd, was no better; for he was a mean and manual Artificer, by Occupation a Carpenter: which was purposely contriv'd to avoid all shew of Greatness, and that the whole Transaction might be carried on in the greatest Humility.

Secondly, We may observe, that *Mary*'s Espousal to *Joseph* was only a Promise or Contract; which, according to the antient laudable Custom, had some space of Time before the Consummation of the Marriage. So we read, *Deut.* 20. 7. that a Man may *betroth himself to a Wife*, and not presently *take her.* And so it was here, *Mary* had been betroth'd to *Joseph*, which was the Espousal, but was not yet married to him; which was the Consummation or the Compleating of it.

Thirdly, We may observe, that in this space of Time between the Espousals and the Marriage, which is express'd here, by *before they came together*, *Joseph* discern'd her to be with Child, but knew not by whom it was; tho it was found after to be in a miraculous manner, by the Operation of the Holy Ghost.

But for the better understanding of this great Affair, we may note, that between the Espousals and the Marriage, or before they came together to compleat it, the Angel *Gabriel* appear'd to the Virgin *Mary*, and saluted her in a strange unusual manner; saying, *Hail thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee, and blessed art thou among Women.* But she being surpriz'd, and casting in her Mind *what manner of Salutation this should be*, the Angel said unto her, that she had found Favour with God above all other Women, and that she should be the Mother of the Son of God: for behold, saith the Angel, *Thou shalt conceive in thy Womb, and bring forth a Son, which shall be call'd the Son of the Highest; and the Lord shall give unto him the Throne of his Father* David, *and he shall reign over the House of* Jacob *for ever, and of his Kingdom there shall be no end*; Luke 1. 28, *&c.* But when *Mary* objected to the Angel, asking how these things could be, she being a Virgin, and not knowing a Man; the Angel reply'd to her, that this should be done by the Holy Ghost, and by the Power of the most

High

High overshadowing her; and for that reason the Child that should be born of her, should not be the Son of Man, but of God. And to confirm her Belief herein, the Angel farther told her, that her Cousin *Elizabeth*, tho past the Age of Child-bearing, was now big with a Son, and that *this was the sixth Month with her, who was call'd barren*; *adding, that with God nothing shall be impossible.* To which *Mary* submitted with all Humility and Thankfulness, saying to the Angel, *Behold thine Handmaid, be it unto me according to thy Word.* Hereupon *Mary*, to keep her self from all carnal Compliances with *Joseph*, and to wait the Issue of this Message, took a long Journey to visit her Cousin *Elizabeth*. At her coming, she presently found the Truth of what the Angel had told her, that her Cousin *Elizabeth* was six months gone of a supernatural Conception, and the Virgin finding her self at that time conceiving, saluted and congratulated her Cousin; upon which Salutation, *Elizabeth* overjoy'd, felt the Babe leaping in her Womb for Joy, to shew the Communication that was to be between *John* and Christ, and to pay at his Lord's Approach his Homage and Adoration to him: at which time, 'tis probable, that *Elizabeth* and her Child were both fill'd with the Holy Ghost, by the Influence and Inspiration whereof it was that she paid so profound a Reverence to the Holy Virgin, calling her the Mother of God, and saying, *Whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?* And then repeating the Angel's Benediction, *Blessed art thou among Women:* adding farther, and *Blessed is the Fruit of thy Womb:* and once more, *Blessed is she that believ'd, for there shall be a Performance unto her of those things, which were told her from the Lord*; being the first of *all Generations, that call'd her Blessed.* From this time these two holy Mothers accompanied together with their two holy Babes, daily blessing and praising God, with the holy Priest *Zacharias*, for the high Honours and Favours vouchsaf'd unto them. Here the blessed Virgin abode for the space of three months, sequestred far from *Joseph* her espous'd Husband, that there might be no carnal or conjugal Commerce pass between them.

At the end of the three Months, *Elizabeth*'s time of Delivery drew near, and the Virgin's being with child began to appear; which made her think of returning home to her own House, trusting that *Joseph* being a good Man, and see-

ing the Circumſtances of her Condition, would keep at a ſufficient diſtance from her.

But what happen'd to her at her Return? why, a very great Croſs ſprung out of the cauſe of her Joy: for returning home diſcernibly with child, *Joſeph* who knew nothing how it came to paſs, the Secret of the Incarnation being yet conceal'd from him, began, not without juſt Cauſe, to be highly offended at it; her ſtraying ſo far and ſo long from home, giving no ſmall occaſion of increaſing his Jealouſy. And here we may gueſs a little, what great Thoughts of Heart, what Strugglings of various and different Paſſions were found in the Breaſts of theſe two pious Perſons. On the one hand,

The Bleſſed Virgin, we may be ſure, was not a little troubled to lie under the Shame and Reproach of Unchaſtity; and the more becauſe tho ſhe was arm'd with a Conſcience of her own Innocence and Integrity, yet ſhe had no way to manifeſt, or make it appear. Should ſhe ſpeak of the heavenly Viſit and Intercourſe with an Angel, it might be thought a ſlender Veil and Excuſe for the ſuppos'd Crime: had ſhe ſaid any thing of the intervening or overſhadowing of the Holy Ghoſt, it might be taken rather for a Dream, than any juſt Defence of her Chaſtity. And what ſeem'd a Wonder, and hardly to be believ'd by her ſelf, would ſeem much more incredible to others. Beſide, her great Modeſty and Humility would not ſuffer her to declare God's ſecret and intimate Tranſactions with her; nor did ſhe know how to reveal a thing, that tended ſo much to her own Praiſe and Honour. Moreover, the Trouble ſhe obſerv'd in her offended Husband, added much to her Grief and Torment.

Under theſe Difficulties ſhe had nothing to do, but to refer her ſelf and her Cauſe to the Juſtice and Goodneſs of God, who ſhe doubted not would in his good time make known her Innocence. In the mean time, ſhe reſolv'd patiently and chearfully to bear whatever Trials the Celeſtial Graces and Favours vouchſaf'd to her, might draw after them; hoping the Son ſhe then bare, would in due time vindicate her Honour. On the other hand,

Joſeph, we may well think, was under no ſmall Concern for the Unchaſtity of his Spouſe, which he thought beyond Suſpicion, being too viſible to be either excus'd or denied. The great Affection he bore to her Perſon, and the high Eſteem he had of her former Piety, would not ſuffer him too

raſhly

raſhly to expoſe her to Ignominy and Shame; but being a good Man, and acting nothing out of Humour or Paſſion, would not preſently bring her to condign Puniſhment, which by the Law was to be ſton'd to death, as we read, *Deut.* 22. 21, 24. And therefore he caſt in his mind how he might be rid of her in ſuch a way, as might leaſt redound to his diſhonour, or her diſgrace; ſo the words of the Goſpel tell us, *Then* Joſeph *her Husband, being a juſt Man, and not willing to make her a publick Example, was minded to put her away privily:* that is, he being a merciful Man, and kind Husband, would not bring upon her the publick Shame and Penalty of a violated Chaſtity, but ſought to diſmiſs her privately, either by concealing the Eſpouſals, which were uſually done ſecretly in the Father's Houſe, or by giving her a Bill of Divorce upon ſome other Pretence.

But while he was meditating on theſe things, to the great trouble and affliction of both Parties, *Behold, the Angel of the Lord appear'd to* Joſeph *in a Dream, ſaying,* Joſeph, *thou Son of* David, *fear not to take unto thee* Mary *thy Wife; for that which is conceiv'd in her, is of the Holy Ghoſt.* When the Matter was ready to break forth, and *Joſeph* was juſt about to execute what he had reſolv'd upon, behold an Angel ſteps in with a Meſſage from God, that deliver'd both from their Sorrows and Fears; to ſhew that Patience under Sufferings will find in due time a ſeaſonable Deliverance. *Joſeph* was here warn'd of God *in a Dream,* which was one of the Ways of God's delivering his Mind to People, as we read, *Numb.* 12. 6. The Angel that deliver'd it, ſaluted *Joſeph,* tho a mean Perſon by the Title of *the Son of* David, to intimate to him his Relation to the Meſſias, who was to be of *David*'s Race. The Meſſage he reveal'd to him, was, that *Mary*'s Conception was not by any Knowledg of Man, but by the powerful Operation or Overſhadowing of the Holy Ghoſt; and therefore he ſhould entertain no Fear or Jealouſy of her Unchaſtity, but receive her as a ſpotleſs and vertuous Wife. To which Divine Meſſage, *Joſeph* gave an undiſputing Faith and ready Obedience.

But the Angel told him not only of her miraculous Conception, but likewiſe of the wonderful Birth of the Son of God and the Saviour of the World, who was ſhortly to be born of her; for *ſhe ſhall bring forth a Son, and thou ſhalt call his Name Jeſus, for he ſhall ſave his People from their Sins:* ſignifying his Birth to be extraordinary, without the Concurrence of Man, and beſide the common Courſe of Gene-

Generation. That his Name ſhould be great and wonderful, for he ſhould be call'd *Jeſus*, that is, a Saviour, a Name above every Name, to which every Knee ſhould bow; partly, in reverence to his Greatneſs, and partly in acknowledgment of his Goodneſs, and the Salvation purchas'd and receiv'd by him: for ſo the Reaſon annex'd declares, *He ſhall ſave his People from their Sins*; meaning, that he ſhall ſave us from the Power and Dominion of Sin, that it ſhall not reign in our mortal Bodies; from the Filth and Pollution of Sin, that it ſhall not defile our Perſons or Performances; and chiefly from the Guilt and Puniſhment of Sin, that it ſhall not deſtroy our Souls. This was ſuch good news, as made holy *Joſeph* to acquieſce and rejoice in it, and may teach us to do the ſame.

But what was the End of the Angel's revealing all this? Why that the next words of the Goſpel will tell us: *Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was ſpoken of the Lord by the Prophet, ſaying, Behold! a Virgin ſhall be with Child, and ſhall bring forth a Son, and they ſhall call his Name* Emmanuel; *which being interpreted, is, God with us.* By which it appears, that this was done not only for the private ſatisfaction of *Joſeph* in this perplex'd Affair; but for the ſatisfaction of the whole World, in a matter that concern'd all Mankind, to confirm their Faith in him, in whom the Prophecies of the Meſſiah were ſo plainly fulfill'd. The Prophet that foretold this, was *Iſaiah*, Chap. 9. 7. where tho the Name *Emmanuel* in the Prophecy ſeems ſomewhat different from the Name *Jeſus* in the Accompliſhment, yet are they in effect the ſame; the one ſignifying his Incarnation, in which he became God with us; the other the Salvation procur'd by it, in which he became a Jeſus, to ſave his People from their Sins, and ſo to perfect the Deſign for which he was born.

But what effect had this Revelation upon the Mind of *Joſeph*, to whom it was made? Why, that follows in the next words; *Then* Joſeph *being raiſed from Sleep, did as the Angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his Wife.* And here we may eaſily imagine, how overjoy'd they both were at this divine Declaration of her Innocence, and their prudent Management of the whole matter. *Joſeph*, who went to bed full of Heavineſs and Grief, awak'd next morning after the Viſion, fill'd with Tranſports and Extaſies of Joy, that he of all the Progeny of *David* ſhould be

be Husband to the Mother of the long-expected Messias, and chosen for a Guardian to her and her holy Child. *Mary*, who was full of Fears and Troubles for the seemingly just Jealousy of her Husband, now rejoic'd with exceeding great Joy at this heavenly Vindication of her Honour. And from that time they cohabited together with a most entire Affection and an inviolable Chastity; for the Close of the Chapter tells us, *That he knew her not, till she had brought forth her first-born Son, and called his Name Jesus.*

Some indeed from the Expression, that *Joseph knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born Son*, have infer'd that he might and did know her after; and the stiling him the first-born, supposes that there might be a second. But he that considers the Scripture-Dialect, will find but little force in such Inferences; for when God said to *Jacob*, *I will not leave thee until I have done that which I spake unto thee*, it follows not, that when that was done, God left him after. 'Tis said of *Michol* the Daughter of *Saul*, *that she had no Child unto the day of her Death*; but will it follow thence, that she had one after? So likewise if the Precept of the sanctifying the First-born should always suppose a second, then none could be sanctify'd till that came, and many would not be sanctify'd at all; which is absurd and impious to imagine.

But tho it was sufficient to the Mystery of the Incarnation, that *Mary* was a Virgin at the Conception and Birth of our Saviour, and nothing that could follow after, could cast any Reflection or Dishonour upon the First-fruit of her Womb; yet the Church in all Ages have believ'd, that she continu'd ever after in a state of Virginity, being perswaded hereunto by that great Honour and Reverence she ever paid to her Son, by the special Regard she had to the Holy Ghost that came upon her, and the Power of the most High that overshadow'd her; as also by the singular Goodness and Piety of *Joseph*, who look'd upon her Body as the Temple of the Holy Ghost, and the Tabernacle of the Son of God, and therefore would not put it to the common Use of carnal and conjugal Embraces: for which reasons she hath been acknowledg'd the Ever-Virgin, and the Ever-blessed Virgin *Mary*.

Thus we see the wonderful Manner and strange Circumstances of this high Birth, as 'tis related by the Evangelists

in

in the Goſpel, and is the great Bleſſing we commemorate at this ſeaſon. From which we may learn,

1*ſt*, The immaculate Conception and Birth of this Son of God, who tho he took Fleſh and Blood like other Children, and was made in the Similitude of our Nature, yet was he perfectly free from all the Pollutions of ſinful Fleſh, and had not the leaſt Taint and Contagion that adheres to it; he was holy, harmleſs, and undefiled, ſeparate from Sinners, and made higher than the Heavens: and ſo was able to take away our Sins, having none of his own.

2*dly*, We may learn to admire and adore the infinite Goodneſs and Wiſdom of God in this Contrivance of Man's Salvation; his Goodneſs in providing and ſending ſuch a Saviour to us, his Wiſdom in bringing it about in ſuch a way, as no human Wit or Policy could ever invent or accompliſh.

3*dly*, This Diſcourſe may teach us the high Honour and Eſteem that is due to the Bleſſed Virgin *Mary*, for being the Mother of God, and the Parent of our Saviour. I know ſome have carry'd this matter too high, even to Adoration, worſhipping her as a Goddeſs, as the Queen of Angels, and the Empreſs of Heaven; paying her more Devotions, and making higher Court to her, than either to the Father or the Son. Some have aſcrib'd all thoſe enamouring Praiſes and Expreſſions in the *Canticles* concerning the Church or Spouſe of God, wholly unto her; as, *Thou art all fair, my Love, there is no ſpot in thee; a Garden inclos'd is my Spouſe; a Spring ſhut up, a Fountain ſealed: Behold, how fair art thou, my Love, my Dove, my Undefiled, fair as the Moon, and clear as the Sun.* Cant. 4. 1, 7, 12, *&c.* And *Bonaventure*, in his Lady's Pſalter, hath throughout the Book of Pſalms put in *Lady* inſtead of *Lord*; and ſo aſcrib'd all that to the Bleſſed Virgin, that is due to God only. But as theſe have exceeded, ſo others have come ſhort in this matter, by with-holding the Honour due to her exceeding high Privilege; not vouchſafing to call her Bleſſed, but looking upon her as an ordinary or common Woman. Let us then take the middle way between theſe Extremes, giving her the Honour that the Angel did, in ſtiling her Bleſſed above all other Women, God having favour'd and dignify'd her above any of her Sex, and fulfilling her own Prediction, that all Generations ſhould call her Bleſſed.

4*thly*, From the Angel's ordering his Name to be call'd *Jeſus*, we may learn the Honour that is due to that high

and sacred Name. The Apostle calls it *a Name above every Name*: 'twas given from Heaven, and brings Salvation with it here on Earth; yea, *there is no other Name given under Heaven by which we can be sav'd, but the Name of the Lord Jesus.* And therefore the Apostle hath commanded, that *to the Name of Jesus all things in Heaven and Earth, and under the Earth, should bow and obey.*

Sixthly, From Christ's being born of a pure Virgin, let us learn all Purity and Holiness of Life. This whole Transaction of Christ's coming into the World had nothing but Purity in it; his Conception was immaculate, his Birth without blemish and without spot, he was every way undefiled and separate from Sinners; his Precepts were pure, and his whole Life the most perfect Pattern of Purity and Holiness: and all this to teach us to *cleanse our selves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, and to perfect Holiness in the Fear of God.* 'Tis only *the pure in Heart and Body that shall see God*; and if we have any hopes of seeing or being saved by him, we must *purify our selves, even as he is pure.* To which end, let us (as we are now commanded) address our selves to that purifying Ordinance of the holy Communion, where we feed on the immaculate Body and Blood of our Saviour; the one being broken, the other shed for us, that our sinful Bodies may be made clean by his Body, and our Souls wash'd through his most precious Blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us: which God grant, &c.

DIS-

DISCOURSE XIX.

The EPISTLE for the Circumcision of *Christ*.

Romans iv. 8——14.

Bleſſed is the Man to whom the Lord will not impute Sin: Cometh this Bleſſedneſs then upon the Circumciſion only, or upon the Uncircumciſion alſo? For we ſay, that Faith was reckon'd to Abraham *for Righteouſneſs*, &c.

WE have celebrated the Birth and Nativity of our Bleſſed Saviour, and conſider'd the Time, Manner, and other Circumſtances relating to it. The next thing that was done to him, was the Circumciſing him the eighth Day, according to the Law given to *Abraham*; which we are to remember at this time, for the great Mercies and Benefits that accrue to us thereby.

The Collect for the Day minds us of God's making his Bleſſed Son to be circumcis'd and obedient to the Law for Man; and from thence teaches to pray for the true Circumciſion of the Spirit, that our Hearts and all our Members being mortify'd from all worldly and carnal Luſts, we may in all things obey his Bleſſed Will. For the better underſtanding theſe things, we muſt note,

1ſt, That Circumciſion was the cutting off the Fleſh of the Fore-skin, in token of mortifying the Luſts of the Fleſh, which is moſt apt to rebel againſt the Spirit. This was expreſly requir'd by God to be done to all Male Children on the eighth Day after their Birth, *Lev.* 12. 3. This Command was firſt given to *Abraham*, as a Sign or Seal of that Covenant which God made with him and his Poſterity, that all Nations ſhould be bleſs'd, redeem'd and ſav'd thro his Seed that was to come; that is, the Meſſias our Lord Chriſt. This Circumciſion was likewiſe a Rite of Initiation into the Church then, as Baptiſm is to us now; it enroll'd them into God's Houſe and Family, and made them Heirs to the Covenant

nant of Promise. This Rite the Blessed Virgin and her pious Husband carefully perform'd to this Holy Child at the prescrib'd time, with all its Solemnities.

Now this Ceremony or Sacrament of Circumcision, tho of God's own Institution, related only to Sin and Sinners; and so this spotless Son of God, by reason of the Purity of his Nature and Birth, could have no need of it for himself: yet having taken upon him our Sins, and undertaken the Expiation of them, he willingly submitted to it, to shew his Obedience to the Law, under which he was made, and to free us from the Obligation of it; giving Testimony thereby that he would not refuse the most painful and dolorous part of our Duty, of which the first Act was the shedding of some of his Blood in Circumcision; which was after compleated by shedding the rest at his Passion: upon which account he is here said to be *circumcis'd*, and made *obedient to the Law for Man*. Again, we must note,

2dly, That the Circumcision of the Spirit, here pray'd for, is the putting off the Body of the Sins of the Flesh, with the other spiritual Effects of Christ's Circumcision. This is called, *The Circumcision of the Heart*; that is, not *outward in the Flesh*, but *inward in the Spirit*; *whose Praise is not of Men, but of God*: Rom. 2. 28, 29. and elsewhere 'tis call'd, *The Circumcision made without Hands*, Col. 2. 11. and consists in cleansing the Heart from all the Impurities of fleshly Lusts; which is the spiritual Grace of the carnal Circumcision.

Now to this spiritual Circumcision it is, that the Promise made to *Abraham*, of blessing all Nations in his Seed, chiefly appertains. Accordingly therefore, the Epistle for this Day shews us,

First, What this Blessedness is.

Secondly, To whom it belongs. And,

Lastly, How we may attain unto it: All which are here laid down, and must be spoken to.

First, The Epistle begins with the Nature of that Blessedness that was promis'd to *Abraham* and his Seed in the Messias, and wherein it consists. This is contain'd in the first words, *Blessed is the Man, unto whom the Lord will not impute Sin*; which words are in the Verses immediately foregoing, quoted from *David*, Psal. 32. where he thus describes the Blessedness of those that follow the Faith of *Abraham*, saying, *Blessed are they whose Iniquities are forgiven, and whose Sins*

are

are cover'd: By which it appears, that true Bleſſedneſs conſiſts in the Pardon and Forgiveneſs of Sin; for 'tis Sin only that ſeparates between God and us, and withholds good things from us; ſo that when that Makebate is remov'd by our Repentance, and his Remiſſion of them, then does he take us again into his Favour, and bleſs us with all heavenly Bleſſings in Chriſt Jeſus. So St. *Peter* told the *Jews*, that God ſent his Son to bleſs them, by turning them from their Iniquities, that he might thereby turn from his Wrath, and the Puniſhment due to them.

But who were the Perſons to whom the Promiſe of this Bleſſedneſs belongs? Was it confin'd to the *Jews* only, who receiv'd the Sign of Circumciſion, or was it extended to the uncircumcis'd *Gentiles* alſo? Why that, the Apoſtle's Reaſoning in the following words will declare; for in the next Verſe he asks the Queſtion, *Cometh this Bleſſedneſs then upon the Circumciſion only?* that is, is it reſtrain'd only to the *Jews* that were circumcis'd? *or upon the Uncircumciſion alſo?* that is, does it reach the *Gentiles* alſo that were not circumcis'd? Before he directly anſwers the Queſtion, he hath recourſe to the Manner of God's dealing with *Abraham*, in the next words; *For we ſay, that Faith was reckon'd to* Abraham *for Righteouſneſs*: and then conſiders the Condition that *Abraham* was in, when his Faith was thus reckon'd to him, moving another Queſtion, *How was it then reckon'd? when he was in Circumciſion, or in Uncircumciſion?* that is, was his Faith thus reckon'd to him before he was circumcis'd, or after? To which he gives this direct Anſwer, That it was *not in Circumciſion, but in Uncircumciſion*; meaning, that *Abraham*'s Faith was thus accepted before he was circumcis'd: for ſo we read, *Gen.* 15. 6. Abraham *believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for Righteouſneſs*; whereas his Circumciſion was a long time after, as we read, *Gen.* 17. 24. *And* Abraham *was ninety Years old and nine, when he was circumcis'd in the Fleſh of his Fore-skin.* By which the Apoſtle proves, that this Bleſſedneſs and Acceptance with God could not be a Privilege annex'd to Circumciſion, and ſo confin'd to the *Jews* only; but is a Grace and Favour of God that appertains as well to the uncircumcis'd *Gentile*, as to the circumcis'd *Jew*; and gives us to underſtand, that believing and obeying of God now as *Abraham* did, will be accepted of God without Circumciſion. But here it may be ask'd,

For what then ſerv'd Circumciſion, if Men might be ſav'd as well without as with it? Why, it ſerv'd as a Sign or

Seal

Seal of the Covenant made with *Abraham* before the promis'd Seed came; during which time, the Church, like an Heir in his Minority, was under Tutors and Guardians, and to be train'd up under the Diſcipline and Pedagogy of the Law, until the time appointed of the Father. Now of this Covenant Circumciſion was the Sign, which *Abraham* therefore *receiv'd* as ſuch; and not only ſo, but, as the Apoſtle here tells us, he receiv'd it as a *Seal of the Righteouſneſs of Faith, which he had being yet uncircumcis'd*, that he might be the Father of all who believe, whether circumcis'd or not: for ſo we are here told, *Abraham*'s believing in God, and obeying of him whilſt he was in a State of Uncircumciſion, made him the Father of all uncircumcis'd Believers. And likewiſe his Continuance in the ſame Faith and Obedience, when he was in a State of Circumciſion, made him the Father of all circumcis'd Believers, who walk in the Steps of that Faith of our Father which he had, being yet uncircumcis'd: which Faith will be imputed to both for Righteouſneſs, as the Apoſtle farther proves in the next words; *For the Promiſe that he ſhould be the Heir of the World was not to* Abraham, *or to his Seed, thro the Law, but thro the Righteouſneſs of Faith:* that is, the great Promiſe made to *Abraham* and his Poſterity of inheriting the Land of *Canaan*, which was a Type of Heaven, was not by the Works of the Law, of which Circumciſion was the Beginning or Entrance, but by Faith in Chriſt, or believing in that promis'd Saviour, by whom alone theſe things could be effected.

For if they that are of the Law be Heirs (ſaith the Apoſtle) *then Faith is made void, and the Promiſe made of none effect.* If it were ſo, that the Inheritance was made over upon the Obſervation of the Moſaical Law, and belong'd to the *Jews* merely by their being circumcis'd, then all Faith in Chriſt would be utterly vain and void, and the Promiſes of Grace and Mercy by him could be of no effect: for all Bleſſedneſs would depend upon obſerving thoſe external Rites, and there would be no need either of any inherent or imputed Righteouſneſs.

The Driſt and Deſign of this Diſcourſe of the Apoſtle is to ſhew, that Juſtification and Acceptance with God is not to be obtain'd by the Works of the Law, but by Faith in Chriſt; *for by the Works of the Law* (ſaith he) *ſhall no Fleſh living be juſtified.* The Ceremonial Law conſiſted of Sacrifices, and divers Waſhings and carnal Ordinances, which were only Types and Shadows of good things to come; but the Subſtance was Chriſt, in whom they were all fulfill'd, and at

whoſe Coming they all vaniſh'd like Darkneſs at the Approach of the Sun; ſo that that could make nothing perfect, and conſequently avail nothing to Juſtification; nor can the Moral Law, which we daily break, do any thing towards it. This he ſtrongly argues in this and other Epiſtles againſt the *Jews*, who depended much upon Circumciſion, and other Works of the Law, boaſting that they had *Abraham* for their Father, and that they were his Seed; thinking that enough to entitle them to the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Inheritance of the Sons of God. Of theſe the Apoſtle ſpeaks, *Rom.* 10. 3. that *being ignorant of God's Righteouſneſs, and going about to eſtabliſh their own, they have not ſubmitted themſelves to the Righteouſneſs of God.* They counted upon a more generous kind of Happineſs to be atchiev'd by the Merit of their own Works, and car'd not for ſuch a borrow'd and beggarly Felicity, that came like an Alms from the Bounty of Heaven: but ſuch proud Contracters with God, as ſcorn to receive Heaven *gratis*, ſhall find Hell for their Reward; and they that refuſe eternal Life, as the Gift of God, ſhall receive eternal Death for their Wages.

Abraham, the Father of the Faithful, was juſtify'd by Faith in Chriſt: for *he ſaw my Day afar off* (ſaith Chriſt) *and rejoiced*; and he *believed in God*, who had promis'd Salvation by him, *and it was counted to him for Righteouſneſs*: and ſo muſt all his Seed and Poſterity too, if they hope for any Juſtification; and it will be in vain to pretend to have *Abraham* for our Father, unleſs we imitate his Faith, and tread in his Steps.

But to return to our Saviour's Circumciſion, the Subject of this Day's Meditations, I ſhall briefly conſider both the End and the Effects of it, and then apply all to the Circumciſion of the Heart, which we are directed to pray for this Day.

For the End of Chriſt's Circumciſion, that was not to cleanſe or cut off any Impurity of his Fleſh: for he was perfectly free from the Stain of all original or actual Pollution, his Conception and Nativity were both immaculate; for being deriv'd from the Holy Ghoſt, that Fountain of Purity, they were both without Blemiſh and without Spot: and ſo he needed no ſuch Ceremony of Cleanſing or Purification upon that account.

But the End of his Circumciſion was like that of his Baptiſm, that he *might fulfil all Righteouſneſs*; for being made obedient to the Law for Man, he was to keep and perform it to a tittle, as well the Ceremonial as the Moral Part of it, which

which he punctually did. He obſerv'd the Law of Circumciſion, becauſe it was commanded of all *Abraham's* Seed, from which he deſcended, and likewiſe that he might ſubject himſelf to the Curſe and Penalty of the Law in our ſtead, to which his Circumciſion made him liable; for that made him a Debtor to the whole Law, both as to the Duty, and the Puniſhment of it. Again,

He ſubmitted to Circumciſion to put an end to it; in which ſenſe he is ſaid to be *the End of the Law for Righteouſneſs to every one that believeth*, Rom. 10. 4. He ſhed his Blood therein to ſave ours, and underwent that ſore and painful Ceremony to free us from it. In a word, he was circumcis'd to put an end to the Law, and aboliſh thoſe carnal Ordinances; and was baptiz'd to begin the Goſpel, and to bring in more ſublime and ſpiritual Precepts: by both which he hath not only *fulfill'd all Righteouſneſs*, but likewiſe (as himſelf declar'd) made *his Yoke more eaſy, and his Burden light.*

And this will lead us to the bleſſed Effects and Benefits of his Circumciſion, which are indeed many and great; for thereby he hath deliver'd his Church from the burdenſom Yoke of Legal Rites and Ceremonies, and blotted out the Hand-writing of Ordinances, that was againſt us; and withal reſcu'd us from the Rigour and Curſe of the Moſaical Covenant. What a heavy Yoke of carnal Ordinances lay on the Neck of our Forefathers, we read *Acts* 15. 10. which St. *Peter* tells us was ſo great, that *neither they nor we were able to bear.* Their Altars daily ſmoked with coſtly Incenſe and Perfumes; their Temples flow'd with the Blood of their Sacrifices; their Waſhings were frequent, and their Oblations numerous and expenſive, and few or no things were left indifferent to them.

Now Chriſt by his Circumciſion hath freed us from this Yoke, *having aboliſh'd in his Fleſh the Enmity, even the Law of Commandments contain'd in Ordinances, and making Peace for us*; Eph. 2. 15. By this he hath obtain'd for us Remiſſion of Sins, by our believing in him; and likewiſe given us his Holy Spirit, to enable us to keep the Covenant of Grace, and inherit the Promiſes made in it.

The Sum of all is, that Chriſt the Son of God, to ſatisfy for us, clothed himſelf in the Likeneſs of ſinful Fleſh, and endur'd all the Shame, Miſery and Puniſhment appertaining to it, ſave only the very Guilt it ſelf, which the Purity of his Nature could not admit; and being without Sin, he ſuffer'd to the utmoſt what to Sinners was due, and perform'd to

the utmoſt what of Sinners could be requir'd, and hath thereby fully ſatisfy'd Divine Juſtice for our Sins, and obtain'd eternal Redemption for us. From whence I proceed, in the

Laſt place, to that ſpiritual Circumciſion of the Heart, which we are taught to pray for this Day; and that conſiſts in cutting off the Fore-skin of the Heart, that is, in mortifying of all carnal and worldly Luſts, and in all things obeying God's Bleſſed Will: 'Tis the caſting all Filthineſs, and all Superfluity of Naughtineſs out of the Soul, and making it the Manſion of Purity and Holineſs. And of this the carnal Circumciſion of the Body is the Sign or Token, which without the former is of no avail; *for Circumciſion verily profiteth* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *if thou be a Keeper of the Law:* that is, if the Sanctity and Purity ſignify'd by it be duly obſerv'd and practis'd; otherwiſe, *if thou art a Breaker of the Law*, and this Purity be wanting, *thy Circumciſion is no better than Uncircumciſion:* for no ſpiritual Advantage can accrue to ſuch by their being circumcis'd. An uncircumcis'd Heathen, having not the Law, yet doing by Nature the things contain'd in the Law, ſhall fare much better than a circumcis'd *Jew*, with all his Boaſt of Privileges, if he be a Tranſgreſſor of the Law: for he is not properly *a* Jew *that is one outwardly, neither is that the true Circumciſion, that is outward in the Fleſh; but he is a* Jew *that is one inwardly, and Circumciſion is that of the Heart, in the Spirit, not in the Letter, whoſe Praiſe is not of Man, but of God*; Rom. 2. 25. to the end.

In a word, 'Tis the Purity of the Heart, and the cutting off all the Superfluities and Pollutions of fleſhly Luſts, that is the true, inward and ſpiritual Circumciſion; without which the outward Circumciſion of the Fleſh is of no Uſe or Benefit.

Thus we ſee the Nature, End and Uſe of this Ceremony: from which we learn,

1ſt, The Honour that Chriſt hath done to our Fleſh, not only in partaking of it, but in not declining the Infirmities, Marks, and miſerable Appurtenances of it: *As Children are Partakers of Fleſh and Blood, he likewiſe took part of the ſame.* And verily he took not on him the Nature of Angels, but he took on him the Seed of *Abraham*; Heb. 2. 14, 16. Hereby he hath dignify'd our Human Nature above the Angelical; and tho we were at firſt made a little lower, yet hereby we are made higher than the Angels. Neither is this Honour and Happineſs confin'd only to the natural Seed of *Abraham*, but

to all the Followers of his Faith, who are ſaid to have *Abraham* for their Father, while they tread in his Steps, and are taken for his ſpiritual Seed, being within the Covenant of Circumciſion, tho they be not circumcis'd. And as *Abraham* rejoic'd to ſee this Day of Chriſt's Appearance, tho darkly in the Prophecy; ſo if we are the genuine Seed of *Abraham*, we ſhall rejoice much more in the actual Accompliſhment.

2*dly*, From this Diſcourſe we may learn whence to look for our Juſtification, *viz.* not from the Works of the Law, by which no Man living can be juſtify'd, but by Faith in Chriſt, who is alone able to juſtify, and make us appear righteous before God. Abraham *believ'd in God, and that was counted to him for Righteouſneſs*; and ſo muſt we too, if we look for any Acceptance with him: for 'tis *not by any Works of Righteouſneſs which we have done*, which are all imperfect, and rather need Remiſſion than require a Reward; *but by his Mercy he ſaveth us*, and 'tis Faith in him that alone intitles us to a ſhare in that Salvation.

But yet this is not an idle, dead and ineffectual Faith, that indulges to Sloth and Careleſſneſs; but a Faith that worketh by Love, and is accompany'd with Fruits of Righteouſneſs, to the Praiſe and Glory of God. Wherefore,

3*dly*, Let us learn from hence not to depend upon any external Duties and Privileges, without the internal Grace ſignify'd and intended by them: for *in Chriſt Jeſus neither Circumciſion availeth any thing, nor Uncircumciſion, but a new Creature*; Gal. 6. 15. We muſt be renew'd within, having our Hearts purify'd by Faith, and purg'd from an evil Conſcience, before any outward Service perform'd to him can find any Acceptance: And what the Apoſtle ſaid then of Circumciſion, is as true now of Baptiſm, that it verily profiteth, if it waſh away our Sins in that Laver of Regeneration; otherwiſe Baptiſm availeth nothing, and is no better than other common Waſhing. To conclude,

Laſtly, Let us, as we are taught this Day, pray for the true Circumciſion of the Heart, and the Baptiſm of the Holy Spirit; that is, let us labour for that inward Purity of Heart and Mind, that is repreſented by both thoſe Sacraments, and can alone give all Virtue and Efficacy to them, not reſting in the outward Sign and Seal, but endeavouring for the inward Grace ſignify'd by them. Let us then, as *Moſes* exhorted the *Iſraelites*, *circumciſe the Fore-ſkin of our Heart, and be no more ſtiff-necked*, but obedient to the Will of God; *Deut.* 10. 16. Nor let us incur the Reproof of St. *Stephen*, who call'd

the *Jews uncircumcis'd in Heart and Ears*, for their obstinate opposing of Christ's Person and Doctrine; *Acts* 7. 51. In a word, let us mortify all carnal and worldly Lusts, and then the Lord will circumcise our Hearts, that we may love, fear and obey him.

DISCOURSE XX.

The GOSPEL for the Circumcision of *Christ*.

St. Luke ii. 15——21.

And it came to pass, as the Angels were gone away from them into Heaven, the Shepherds said one to another, Let us now go down even to Bethlehem, *and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us*, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day gives an Account of the Time and Place of our Saviour's Circumcision, together with some remarkable Passages that went before and led to it. The Words in the Beginning, *And it came to pass, as the Angels were gone away into Heaven*, refer to what went before in the preceding part of the Chapter; where we read of our Saviour's Birth, and the Ministry of the Angels in publishing and attending upon it. In the fourth and following Verses we read of the Place of his Birth, which was not at *Jerusalem*, or any great and populous City, where the News might have drawn many Visiters and Admirers; but at *Bethlehem*, a poor, desolate and unfrequented Village, where *Mary* was deliver'd in an Inn, without the Assistance of Midwife or Neighbours: And *having brought forth her first-born Son, she wrap'd him in Swadling-Clothes, and laid him in a Manger, because there was no room for him in the Inn.*

The Persons to whom the Intelligence hereof was first brought, were not any great Men, who were then at ease and a-sleep, being Midnight; but a few poor harmless Shepherds, who were then awake, and watching their Flocks in the Plains about *Bethlehem*; where *David*, the Father of our Lord, who was a Shepherd, had many a Night watch'd over his

his Sheep. Some indeed have thought something mysterious, and more than ordinary, in Christ's being first made known to the Shepherds; as if the yeaning of this Lamb of God, *that taketh away the Sins of the World*, could not be more fitly related to any than to the Shepherds; nor could the Tidings of this great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls, of this chief and good Shepherd, that laid down his Life for the Sheep, be better made known to any, than to the vigilant Shepherds, that were then watching their Flocks.

But however that be, these Shepherds, in the Night wherein our Saviour was born, saw a sudden and strange Light rising and shining round about them; which for its great and glaring Brightness fill'd them with Amazement and Terror. But while they were thus trembling and astonish'd, behold an Angel in great Glory, to do Honour to this new-born Prince, appear'd to the Shepherds, to tell them the joyful News of the Birth of a Saviour, who was Christ the Lord, *ver.* 10, 11. giving them this Sign to know him by; *You shall find the Babe wrap'd in Swadling-Clothes, and lying in a Manger*; a strange Sign, one would think, for so great a Prince: and yet not so improper for such a Saviour, who came to restore those by Humility, who fell by Pride, and to save the World by Suffering, which was undone by Sin. When the Angel had deliver'd this Message, there came down into the Air hovering over them, a great Company of the Heavenly Host, with great Joy celebrating the Birth of this Saviour, and singing his Nativity-Song in the sight and hearing of those ravish'd Shepherds, who were to relate it to others, that the World might hear and receive it from them.

The Hymn or Song that was sung by the Heavenly Quire of Angels upon this occasion, is related *ver.* 14. of this Chapter, *viz. Glory to God in the Highest*, who sent his Son to reconcile us to himself; *on Earth Peace*, upon the Birth of this Prince of Peace; *Good-will towards Men*, let Love and Kindness be henceforth shew'd to one another. By this Song and Adoration of the Angels was that Prophecy of *David* fulfill'd, *Psal.* 97. 7. *When he brought his First-born into the World, he said, And let all the Angels of God worship him*; which is mention'd as done by them to the Son of God, *Heb.* 1. 6. And the Apostle, in describing the Mystery of the Incarnation, tells us, that when *God was manifested in the Flesh*, he was *seen of Angels*, 1 Tim. 3. 16. perhaps (as one hath observ'd) with relation to this solemn Visit and Doxology of the Angels at Christ's Nativity.

When the Angels had thus congratulated the Birth of our Saviour, and ſung this Song in the hearing of the Shepherds to ſolemnize his Nativity, they all aſcended up again into Heaven, from whence they came; where, as there is Joy over one Sinner that repenteth, *Luke* 15. 7, 10. ſo we may conceive a much greater Rejoicing, when Salvation came to the whole World.

And now we are come to the Goſpel for this Day, which begins thus: *And it came to paſs, as the Angels were gone away from them into Heaven, the Shepherds ſaid one to another, Let us now go even to* Bethlehem, *and ſee this thing which is come to paſs; which the Lord hath made known unto us.*

Whilſt the Angels were with theſe Shepherds, relating thoſe glad Tidings, and ſinging and praiſing God for them, the Shepherds were ſo aſtoniſh'd and tranſported, that they ſcarce knew what they had heard and ſeen; but when they were gone, they began to recollect themſelves, and ſaid one to another, "Come let us go into *Bethlehem*, and there ſeek to ſa-"tisfy our ſelves in the Truth of what hath been told us." Their Fear being remov'd, their Curioſity led them without delay to the Place; where, 'tis ſaid, *They came with haſte, and found* Mary *and* Joſeph, *and the Babe lying in a Manger:* Strange Humility and Condeſcenſion, that thoſe eminent Saints ſhould have no better Lodging than a Stable, and the Son of God no better Cradle than a Manger! And yet this was the Sign given by the Angel to the Shepherds; *Ye ſhall find the Babe wrap'd in Swadling-Clothes*, not in a Crimſon Mantle, and lying not in a Cradle of Ivory, but *in a Manger:* A ſtrange Sign, one would think, of ſo great a Prince, and enough to diſcourage the Shepherds from going to ſee ſo mean a Sight; but yet not ſo improper for ſuch a Saviour, who was to reſtore the World by Humility, that fell by Pride, and regain that by Suffering, which was loſt by Sin. Accordingly the Shepherds coming to *Bethlehem*, found all things as the Angel had related to them: *And when they had ſeen it*, they were ſo big and full of the News, that they could not contain or confine it within their own Breaſts, but publiſh'd it every where, *and made known abroad the Saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all they that heard it, wonder'd at thoſe things which were told them by the Shepherds.* The Relation of thoſe ſtrange things from Perſons that were Eye-witneſſes of them, and wholly unſuſpected of any Forgery, fill'd all that heard them with Wonder and Aſtoniſhment.

But Mary *all the while kept all theſe things, and ponder'd them in her Heart.* She ſecretly weigh'd all Matters in her private Meditations, ſilently comparing one thing with another, and wiſely conſidering how God had order'd all his Dealings with them. *After which the Shepherds return'd, glorifying and praiſing God for all the things that they had heard and ſeen, as it was told unto them*; i. e. they went back to their Flocks, rejoicing at the exact Agreement they found between what they ſaw, and what the Angel had told them; and likewiſe giving Praiſe and Glory to God, as for the Mercy ſhew'd to *Iſrael* in general, ſo for the great Favour done to them in particular, that they ſhould be the firſt that ſhould behold the Meſſias, and the firſt Publiſhers of him to the World.

And now follows the principal thing to be conſider'd in this Goſpel, and that for which it was ſelected to be read on this Day: and that is contain'd in theſe words; *And when eight Days were accompliſh'd for the circumciſing of the Child, his Name was call'd Jeſus; which was ſo nam'd of the Angel, before he was conceiv'd in the Womb.* Where we may obſerve,

Firſt, The Time and other Circumſtances of our Saviour's Circumciſion: *When eight Days were accompliſh'd for the circumciſing of the Child*, he was circumcis'd; ſo it muſt be ſupply'd to make the Senſe perfect, tho by an Ellipſis frequent in the *Greek* Tongue it be not plainly expreſs'd.

Secondly, The Name then given to him; *His Name was called Jeſus.*

Thirdly, The Giver of that Name, which was an Angel; *He was ſo named of the Angel, before he was conceived in the Womb.*

Firſt, The Solemnity of this Day calls upon us to treat of the Circumciſion of our Saviour; who, when eight Days were accompliſh'd, was circumcis'd after the Cuſtom and Manner of the *Jews*. There was a Law given to *Abraham*, requiring all Males to be circumcis'd as a Sign and Seal of that Covenant which God made with him and his Poſterity, as we read *Gen.* 17. it conſiſted in cutting off the Fore-skin of the Fleſh, as a Token of cutting off the Fore-skin of the Heart, and cleanſing it from all Impurity. This Ceremony was to be perform'd on the eighth Day after the Birth, not that there was any myſtical Signification in that, above any other Number, as ſome have vainly imagin'd; but partly that

a Sabbath-day might paſs over the Infant, before it was done, which was thought to add ſome ghoſtly Strength and Perfection to it; and partly becauſe it could not well endure that painful Rite till ſome time after the Birth, and the doing of it ſooner or later, might be attended with greater Danger: and therefore God himſelf was pleas'd to appoint the eighth Day as the fitteſt Seaſon for this Operation; which he did partly likewiſe, that Children might be dedicated to him, and taken into Covenant betimes; which is a Matter of great Benefit and Concernment to them, eſpecially in caſe of any ſudden Death or Danger. Which ſhews the Cruelty of thoſe Parents, who deny or defer Baptiſm, that now ſucceeds in the room of Circumciſion.

Now Chriſt ſubmitted to this painful Rite of Circumciſion to fulfil the Law, as he after did to the milder one of Baptiſm to fulfil the Goſpel; and by both he is truly ſaid to fulfil all Righteouſneſs: which things he yielded to not for himſelf, but for us; for he needed neither, either to make or ſignify his Purity, but merely to engage and encourage us to the Purity repreſented by them. So our Church tells us in the Collect for this Day, that *God made his Bleſſed Son to be circumcis'd and obedient to the Law for Man.* He did it to give us an Example of Obedience, and to free us from the Obligation of that Ceremony; thereby giving Teſtimony, that he refus'd not the moſt painful and grievous part of our Duty, but underwent it himſelf to deliver us from it. Hence the Apoſtle tells us, that as he was *made of a Woman*, to take our Nature, ſo was he *made under the Law*, to take our Debt upon him: *Gal.* 4. 4. And this he did at his Circumciſion, which brought him under that Obligation. So the ſame Apoſtle teſtifies, that *whoever is circumcis'd, is thereby made a Debtor to keep the whole Law*; Gal. 5. 3. Circumciſion was the Sign and Seal of the Covenant made with *Abraham* and his Seed; wherein God promis'd to be their God, and they to be his People: and they that receiv'd that Mark in their Fleſh, did as it were enter into Bond to keep the whole Law, and obſerve all the Conditions of that Covenant. Accordingly Chriſt, who was that promiſed *Seed of* Abraham, in whom *all the Nations of the Earth ſhould be bleſſed*, took this Mark of Circumciſion, and thereby this Obligation upon him; at which time, by ſhedding a few Drops of his Blood, he did as it were ſign the Bond, and gave them as an Earneſt or Pledg of his ſhedding all the reſt in due time for the Salvation of Mankind. All which things he perform'd to a tittle, by

his

his Active Obedience, observing all the Precepts of the Law; and by his Passive Obedience, undergoing all the Penalties due to our Breaches of it: and by both he is become our All-sufficient Surety and Saviour.

Thus we see the Nature and Reasons of Christ's Circumcision, which being the Mark of Distinction of *Abraham*'s Seed, 'twas requisite he should take it, that he might be known to descend from him, and to take off the Prejudices of the *Jews*, who would never have receiv'd him for the Messiah or promised Seed without it: As also being the Seal of the Covenant between God and his People, 'twas necessary for him to submit to it, that he might take upon him the Obligation of the Law, without which he could never have satisfy'd Divine Justice in our stead. From whence I proceed,

Secondly, To the Name that was then given him; *When eight Days were accomplish'd for the circumcising of the Child, his Name was called Jesus.* That Names were given of old at Circumcision, as they are now at Baptism, is a Matter evident from the Practice both of the *Jewish* and the Christian Church. Abraham *circumcis'd his Son on the eighth Day, and called his Name* Isaac; *Gen.* 21. 3, 4. *It came to pass on the eighth Day, that they came to circumcise the Child, and called him* Zacharias, *after the Name of his Father*; Luke 1. 59. And here, in compliance with that Custom, at Christ's Circumcision *his Name was called Jesus.* The Reason and Import of this Name is given, *Mat.* 1. 21. *Thou shalt call his Name Jesus; for he shall save his People from their Sins.* The *Hebrew* Name *Joshua* in the Old Testament, and the *Greek* Name *Jesus* in the New, carry much the same Sense and Signification, both of them signifying a Saviour, only with this difference: *Joshua*, the Saviour of the Old Testament, only sav'd the People of *Israel* from temporal Enemies, and led them into an earthly *Canaan*, where they enjoy'd only a short Rest and Plenty; but *Jesus*, the Saviour of the New, saves his People from more spiritual and dangerous Enemies, even from Sin and Satan, Death and Hell, and leads them into a heavenly *Canaan*, where they are instated into endless Bliss and Glory. And if the former was worthy the Name of a Saviour for those low and temporal Deliverances, how much more worthy is the latter to be call'd Jesus, for the much higher and eternal Salvation he hath wrought for us? And this he did,

1*st*, By

1ſt, By purchaſing the Pardon of our Sins, and making Peace with God for us. And,

2dly, By renewing our Natures, and turning us from the Love of Sin to the Practice of Righteouſneſs; the former he did by the Price of his Blood, the latter by the Power of his Grace: both which were neceſſary in order to the obtaining Salvation for us; the one to procure us a Title and Claim to it, the other to qualify and diſpoſe us for it; and by both he is become our compleat and only Saviour: for *there is no Salvation in any other*, neither *is there any other Name given under Heaven, by which we can be ſaved, but only this Name of Jeſus*; which ought therefore to be for ever honour'd and ador'd by us.

Thirdly, The laſt thing here to be conſider'd, is the Giver of this Name, contain'd in theſe words; *Which was ſo named of the Angel, before he was conceiv'd in the Womb.* 'Tis not often that Men have Names appointed for them before they are conceiv'd or born, eſpecially by a Divine Deſignation from Heaven; but ſo it happen'd in this Caſe of our Saviour, where God the Father (as one obſerves) was his God-father, and ſent an Angel from Heaven as his Proxy, to give the Name in his ſtead; which Name was firſt ſignify'd by the Angel to *Mary* before her Conception, *Mat.* 1. 21. *Thou ſhalt conceive in thy Womb, and bear a Son, and ſhalt call his Name Jeſus*; and after to *Joſeph* her Husband, upon his firſt diſcerning her to be with Child, as we read in the ſame Chapter. And this Name was repeated again in the Hymns of *Zachary* and *Simeon*, Luke 1. together with the Reaſon for which it was given, which was upon the account of that Salvation which he was to bring both to *Jew* and *Gentile*. And here we may obſerve,

That as our Lord's Name was given upon this good account, ſo all good Chriſtians have thought fit ever ſince to give ſuch Names to their Children, as carry ſome good Signification in them, ſuch as are memorative of ſome Bleſſing, or inſtructive of ſome Duty. And hence hath proceeded that laudable Practice of giving Children the Names of the Apoſtles, or other eminent Worthies that have been famous for their Piety and good Works; by that means either to ſtir them up to a pious Imitation, or to reproach them for degenerating from ſuch excellent Examples. This is the Subſtance of this Day's Goſpel; which may teach us,

(1.) To

(1.) To magnify the great Condescension of this Son of God, in giving the poor Shepherds next to his Parents the first sight of him. There were no doubt many great Persons at that time in or near the City, whom the Fame of this Birth had drawn thither; yet God did not think fit to send an Angel with this joyful News to any of them, but honour'd the poor Shepherds with the first View of him: by which it appear'd, that *not many Mighty, not many Wise, not many Noble are called; but God hath chosen the weak and the base things of the World to confound the mighty; even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.* From whence we may gather how much he regarded Meanness above all the Glory and Grandeur of the World, and how welcome in his Infancy this Visit of the Poor was to him, that were sent him by his Father.

(2.) From our Saviour's submitting to be circumcis'd for the Good of others, which he in no wise needed for himself, we may learn to bear some Hardships and Restraints, which are not necessary upon our own accounts, when we find they may help forward the Salvation of others; and to sustain some Difficulties in our own Bodies, thereby to promote the Good of others Souls.

(3.) From the Son of God's being call'd Jesus, a Saviour, merely to save his People from their Sins, let us learn not to despise or neglect so great Salvation; for it will highly aggravate our Condemnation, if when God the Father sent his Son on purpose to save us, we reject the Method of Salvation, and wilfully refuse to be sav'd by him: the greatest Portion of Vengeance will fall to the Lot of such obstinate Sinners, who abuse this unspeakable Mercy, and slight such gracious Offers. It will be more tolerable for *Tyre* and *Sydon*, and other barbarous Nations that sit in Darkness, and never heard the glad Tidings of a Saviour, than for those to whom Salvation is tender'd, and yet cast it behind their back. Wherefore,

Lastly, Let us beg of God, that his Grace that bringeth Salvation may have its due Effect upon us, that he would be pleas'd to finish that Work in us, which his Son came into the World about: In a word, that he would save us from the Power and Pollution of Sin here, and then we need not fear of his saving us from the everlasting Punishment of it hereafter.

DIS-

DISCOURSE XXI.

The EPISTLE for the *Epiphany*, or the Manifestation of Christ to the *Gentiles*.

Ephes. iii. 1——13.

For this cause, I Paul, *the Prisoner of Jesus Christ for you* Gentiles, *if ye have heard of the Dispensation of the Grace of God, which is given me to you-ward*, &c.

THE Collect for this Day minds us of God's manifesting his only-begotten Son to the *Gentiles*, by the leading of a Star; and thence takes occasion to pray, that we who know him now by Faith, may after this Life have the Fruition of his glorious Godhead.

The Epistle for the Day declares to us this great Mystery of Godliness; how God *manifest in the Flesh*, who was first preach'd to the *Jews* only, was after manifested *to the Gentiles* also, and thereby *preach'd and believ'd on in the World*. The Relation of it begins with the Revealer of it, who was St. *Paul*, stil'd therefore the great Apostle of the *Gentiles*. He endur'd great Persecution from the *Jews*, and was now under Imprisonment in *Rome* for preaching of this Doctrine; *For this cause* (saith he) *I* Paul, *a Prisoner of Jesus Christ for you* Gentiles. The *Jews* look'd upon themselves as *a peculiar People*, chosen of God, and advanc'd to high and eminent Privileges above others, from whom they were separated by a *Partition-Wall*; they were his adopted Children, *whose were the Fathers, of whom as concerning the Flesh Christ came*; Rom. 9. 4, 5. And therefore could not hear of the *Gentiles*, who were Strangers to the Covenant of Promise, and Aliens to the Commonwealth of *Israel*, that they should become Fellow-Citizens with the Saints, and Members with them of the Houshold of God. So that the Apostle's enlarging the Pales of the Church, and taking in the out-cast *Gentiles* into Copartnership with them, and making

making them Coheirs and Partakers of the Promiſes, greatly nettled the *Jews*, and expos'd the Apoſtle to many and great Hardſhips from them: for he here tells us, that he was made a Priſoner of Chriſt for the *Gentiles*; that is, for aſſerting their Rights and Privileges by Jeſus Chriſt, and vindicating the Liberty of the Goſpel from the *Jewiſh* Yoke; for which, he elſewhere tells us, that he became an Ambaſſador in Bonds. However, he perſiſted to publiſh this Doctrine in his Epiſtle to the *Galatians*, and to theſe *Epheſians* alſo in the foregoing Chapters of this Epiſtle: which occaſion'd the following words, *If ye have heard of the Diſpenſation of the Grace of God, which is given me to you-ward.* Which words are rather an Affirmation, than a Doubt; like thoſe, Eph. 4. 21. *If ſo be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the Truth is in Jeſus:* the meaning whereof is, that they had indeed heard and been taught thoſe things.

Now *the Diſpenſation of the Grace of God*, which they could not but know, was the Commiſſion to preach the Goſpel to the *Gentiles*, and the Power to ſettle and conſtitute Churches among them: *Which Power* (ſaith he) *was given or granted me to you-ward*; that is, towards the *Gentiles*, to whom I was ſent both as a Preacher and an Apoſtle. For you muſt needs have heard (as he goes on) *how that by Revelation he made known unto me the Myſtery, as I wrote afore in few words:* meaning, that God by Viſion or Revelation had imparted to him his ſecret Will and Purpoſe of uniting *Jew* and *Gentile* into one Flock, and making them all one in Jeſus Chriſt; of which (ſaith he) I gave you ſome brief account in the foregoing Chapters; particularly in Chap. 1. 9, 10. where he tells them, that God had *made known to him, and the other Apoſtles, the Myſtery of his Will, according to his Good-pleaſure, which he had purpos'd in himſelf; that in the Diſpenſation of the Fulneſs of Time, he might gather together in one all things in Chriſt, which are in Heaven and on Earth, even in him.* By all which (ſaith he) *when ye read* and conſider, *ye may underſtand my knowledg in the Myſtery of Chriſt*; that I do not ſpeak at random or Uncertainties, but that I am thorowly inſtructed in the Myſtery which I now reveal unto you. *Which Myſtery in other Ages was not made known to the Sons of Men, as it is now reveal'd unto his Apoſtles and Prophets by the Spirit.* For tho the Calling of the *Gentiles* was a thing promis'd and foretold in the Old Teſtament, yet they who

lived

lived in those times had not so clear and distinct a knowledg of this matter, as is now by the Holy Ghost reveal'd unto the Ministers of the Gospel. The Promise made to *Abraham*, that *in his Seed all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed*, was but a remote and dark Discovery of this Mystery. *Jacob*'s Prophecy, that *at* Shiloh's *coming, unto him the gathering of the People should be*, is likewise but an obscure Intimation of this matter. Nor was that Promise of *giving to the* Messias *the Heathen for his Inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the Earth for his Possession*, much clearer. These were but obscure Hints of that great Truth which now shines out to us with the brightest Lustre. The fulfilling of these Promises and Prophecies by the preaching and propagating of the Gospel to the Heathen World, hath given us a clearer light into this Mystery, which was in a great measure hid from former Ages; and the many and great Benefits and Privileges of it, were never so well understood, as now they are.

From whence the Apostle proceeds to unfold this Mystery of the calling in of the *Gentiles* in all the parts and particulars of it; viz. *That the* Gentiles *should be Fellow-Heirs, and of the same Body, and Partakers of his Promise in Christ by the Gospel.* Where,

1st, They are said to be Fellow-Heirs with the *Jews*, and intitled to the same Inheritance with them. The time was, when to the *Jews* only appertain'd the Adoption of Sons, who as sole Heirs had the only Right to the Inheritance of the Land of *Canaan*, and what was represented by it, the Kingdom of Heaven; the *Gentiles* being as so many Aliens and Outcasts, that had *none Inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set their foot on.* But Christ, who was the great Heir of all things, adopted the *Gentiles* also into his Family, and by the Spirit of Adoption enabled them to cry, *Abba*, Father: by which means he hath made them Fellow-Heirs, and given them an equal Right to the Inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven. Again,

2dly, They are said to be *of the same Body*; that is, they are united in the same Christian Church, which is frequently in Scripture stil'd the Body of Christ. The *Gentiles* were of old excluded from all the Privileges of the Temple, and by a Partition-Wall separated from the Worship and Service of it: they were confin'd to an outward Court, call'd the Court of the *Gentiles*, wherein they were kept at a distance from the Altar, and all the Sacrifices offer'd

offer'd on it, and receiv'd no Benefit by any of their Expiations. *In* Jewry *is God known* (ſaith the Pſalmiſt) *and his Name is great in* Iſrael; *at* Salem *is his Temple, and his Tabernacle in* Sion; *he gave his Laws unto* Jacob, *and his Statutes and Ordinances unto* Iſrael: *he hath not dealt ſo with other Nations, neither have the Heathens the knowledg of his ways.* By which it appears, that the *Gentiles* were of old ſhut out of all the Privileges of the Church, being without God, and without Chriſt, and ſo without Hope in the World, as the Apoſtle deſcribes their forlorn State, *Eph.* 2. 12. but now in Chriſt Jeſus they who were *ſometimes afar off* from God, his Covenant, and his Church, are *brought nigh by the Blood of his Croſs*: where there is an Alluſion to the Cuſtom in thoſe *Eaſtern* Countries, where Leagues were wont to be ſtruck and ſeal'd with Blood. By this Chriſt is ſaid to be *our Peace*, who hath made both *Jew* and *Gentile* one, and hath *broken down the middle Wall of Partition* that was in the Temple between them; having aboliſh'd in his Fleſh the Enmity, even the Law of carnal Ordinances, to make in himſelf, of two diſtant People, one Man, reconciling both unto God in one Body of his Church by his Croſs, thereby ſlaying the Enmity, and making Peace and Union between them. Again,

3*dly*, They are here ſaid to be *Partakers of the ſame Promiſe in Chriſt by the Goſpel*. There was a Promiſe made to *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, that God would be their God, and they ſhould be to him a People; which Promiſe was confin'd to their Poſterity of the *Jewiſh* Nation, in which the *Gentiles* had no ſhare: for which reaſon the Apoſtle ſtiles them *Strangers to the Covenant of Promiſe*. But Chriſt hath ſince admitted them to the Participation of the ſame Grace and Favour; ſo that now the *Gentiles* are no more Strangers and Foreigners, but Fellow-Citizens with the *Jews*, and being taken into the Houſhold of God, are made Heirs of the ſame Promiſe. And all this by the preaching of the Goſpel, the receiving whereof was the means of intitling them to theſe Privileges.

This is the Myſtery of the Epiphany, or Chriſt's Manifeſtation to the *Gentiles*, whereby he gather'd them into the one Body of the Chriſtian Church, and call'd them to the Means and Hopes of Salvation by the Promulgation of the Goſpel: *Whereof* (ſaith the Apoſtle, in the next words) *I was made a Miniſter, according to the Gift of the Grace of God, given unto me by the effectual working of his Power*;

meaning, that in this great Work God was pleas'd to make uſe of him as an Inſtrument, furniſhing him with his Grace, and endowing him with the Gift of Tongues and Miracles to that end; thereby certifying his Choice of him, and confirming the Doctrine deliver'd by him. *Unto me* (ſaith he) *who am leſs than the leaſt of all Saints, is this Grace given, that I ſhould preach among the* Gentiles *the unſearchable Riches of Chriſt*: Where he aſcribes nothing to himſelf, nor pretends to any Merits or Abilities above others for this Work, but rather owns himſelf the moſt unfit for and unworthy of this Office, and aſcribes all only to the Grace of God given to him; that he who was a Perſecutor, ſhould be made a Promoter of his Church, and the leaſt of all Saints ſhould have the greateſt of Truſts committed to him, to make known to the *Gentiles* the ineſtimable Goodneſs and Bounty of Chriſt towards them, in receiving them freely into Covenant, and making them Members of his Church and Family; a Mercy which no Wiſdom of Man could have found out, nor would it have gain'd Belief, if the Wiſdom of God had not imparted it to us, and commiſſion'd us in an extraordinary manner to reveal it. *And to make all Men ſee what is the Fellowſhip of the Myſtery, which from the beginning of the World hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jeſus Chriſt.* By this the World is thorowly acquainted with this Myſtery, of which we are all Partakers; God having now fully diſcover'd that to us, which was for a long time kept ſecret, being lock'd up in the Boſom of God, tho he all along intended it by Jeſus Chriſt; by whom as he made the natural World, and all things in it, ſo hath he new made the ſpiritual World, by regenerating the *Gentiles*, and calling them from their Heathen Idolatries to a State of Salvation by him. The end of all which is ſet forth in the next Verſe, *To the intent* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *that now unto the Principalities and Powers in heavenly Places, might be known by the Church the manifold Wiſdom of God*; that is, that the Angels and glorify'd Spirits in Heaven, who deſire to look into this Myſtery, might, by thus gathering all People into one Univerſal Church, diſcover the variety of God's Wiſdom, in the Diſpenſations of his Grace, firſt to the *Jews*, and after to the *Gentiles*, *according to the eternal Purpoſe which he purpos'd in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.* By which it appears that God had, from all Eternity, decreed, in the ſeveral Ages of the World, to order Matters after this

this manner, that in the laſt Age the *Gentiles* and Heathen Idolaters ſhould have Chriſt reveal'd to them, and that all Mankind ſhould be ſav'd by Faith in him. *In whom therefore* (as he adds in the Cloſe) *we have Boldneſs and Acceſs with Confidence by the Faith of him*: that is, now by Chriſt's Merits and Mediation, the *Gentiles*, as well as *Jews*, and all that believe in him, may have a freedom of Acceſs unto God, and come with boldneſs to the Throne of Grace, with an aſſurance of finding Favour and Acceptance. For now (ſaith St. *Peter*, upon the *Gentiles* receiving the Holy Ghoſt) *I perceive of a truth that God is no Reſpecter of Perſons, but in every Nation, he that feareth him, and worketh Righteouſneſs, is accepted with him*: Acts 10. 34, 35. Chriſt having preach'd Peace to them that were far off, and to them that are nigh, *We have both, thro him, Acceſs by one Spirit unto the Father*; Eph. 2. 17, 18. The *Gentiles* before were excluded from the Temple, and had no ſhare in the Devotions that were offer'd up in it; but now all Nations are indifferently admitted to preſent their Prayers unto God, and have the ſame Confidence and Liberty of approaching to him as their Father, having the ſame Spirit of Chriſt to intercede for them.

This is briefly the great Mercy contain'd in the Epiſtle for this Day. From which we may learn,

(1.) To acknowledg and adore the infinite Love of God to the *Gentiles*, of whoſe Race we are, in turning them from Darkneſs to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God. Herein the Love of God to Mankind appear'd, in that *he would have all Men to be ſav'd, and to come to the knowledg of the Truth*; 1 Tim. 2. 4. *God ſo lov'd the World* (ſaith St. *John*) *that he ſent his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.* He now makes no Diſtinction between *Jew* and *Gentile*, for they are all one in Chriſt Jeſus. He came firſt indeed to the loſt Sheep of the Houſe of *Iſrael*, whom he gather'd into his Fold, and made them his own Peculiar; but he had other Sheep (as he tells us) that belong'd not to this Fold, meaning the *Gentiles*, them alſo he brought in, that there might be one Fold and one Flock under the great Shepherd and Biſhop of our Souls. Hence he is ſaid to *be a Light to lighten the* Gentiles, as well as the *Glory of his People* Iſrael. The Greatneſs of which Mercy will beſt appear, by conſidering,

1. The miſerable State and Condition of the *Gentiles*, before they receiv'd the Goſpel. And,

2. The happy Change made in them by their becoming Chriſtians. As for their former State, it was too forlorn and ſad to be deſcrib'd, the Scripture ſets it forth by the black Names of Night and Darkneſs: *Ye were ſometimes Darkneſs* (ſaith the Apoſtle to theſe *Epheſians*) Eph. 5. 8. and elſewhere they are ſaid to *live and walk on ſtill in Darkneſs*, to *do the Works of Darkneſs*, and to be even *Darkneſs it ſelf*. All which Expreſſions betoken the great Ignorance in which they liv'd, and the great Dangers and Fears to which they were expos'd. Their Ignorance was exceeding groſs, even to be felt, for they were deſtitute of all true Knowledg of God, of Chriſt, and of themſelves; by which means they were carry'd away into the fouleſt Idolatries, and liv'd in the moſt abominable Vices and Superſtitions. Their Dangers and Fears were far greater than thoſe that attend the blackeſt Night and Darkneſs; for like Perſons loſt and bewildred, they were compaſs'd about with the Snares of Death, and the Pains of Hell were ever ready to take hold of them. In this ſad and gloomy Condition they had ſtill continu'd, and we with them, had not Chriſt and his Goſpel been this Day manifeſted to them.

But Thanks be to God, a bleſſed Change hath been wrought by the Mercy and Manifeſtation of a Saviour this Day; for thereby Darkneſs is turn'd into Light, Ignorance into Knowledg, Fear into Hope, Sadneſs into Joy, and Miſery into Happineſs. As our Saviour told *Zacchæus*, upon his coming to him, *This Day is Salvation come to thine Houſe*; ſo we may ſay upon this occaſion, this Day is Salvation come to Mankind, for *the Grace of God that bringeth Salvation hath appear'd unto all Men*; Tit. 2. 12. Now Error and Ignorance are vaniſh'd, being diſpel'd by the great Light of the World, as Darkneſs is by the Approach of the Sun. Now all Heatheniſh Idolatries and Superſtition diſappear, and a more rational, ſpiritual, and conſiſtent way of Worſhip ſucceeds in their room. Now Life and Immortality are brought to Light by the Goſpel, and all the weighty Truths, that relate to the Salvation of Mankind, fully clear'd up, by the Appearance and Doctrine of our Saviour. In a word, what before was hid from the Wiſe and Prudent, is now reveal'd unto Babes; which great Bleſſings we are ſtill to celebrate with the loudeſt Praiſes and Thankſgivings.

Laſtly,

Laſtly, We may learn hence to make a right Uſe and Improvement of this great and undeſerv'd Favour to us *Gentiles*, and that is, to *walk in the Light as he is in the Light*, and to make it ſo *ſhine before Men, that they may ſee our good Works, and glorify our Father which is in Heaven*; who hath call'd us miſerable Sinners, who lay in Darkneſs and the ſhadow of Death, to be the Children of God, and exalted us to everlaſting Life. Let not this then *be our Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and we love Darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe our Deeds are evil:* But let us *walk as Children of Light, and of the Day*, caſting off the Works of Darkneſs, and putting on the Armour of Light, to defend us from all Iniquity. This is the Senſe of thoſe many Precepts, to walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith we are call'd, and to let our Converſation be as becometh the Goſpel of Chriſt, and the like: all which require us to lead our Lives by the Light we have receiv'd, and to increaſe in Grace and Virtue as we do in Knowledg; otherwiſe it will only increaſe our Guilt, and heighten our Condemnation. The old Vices of the Heathens, in which they liv'd during the times of Ignorance and Darkneſs, are now monſtrouſly abſurd and unbecoming; the Danger and Deformity of them are now plainly laid open to us, and we cannot ſin at ſo cheap a rate as they did. Our Sin will be greater, and the Puniſhment will be proportionable: wherefore let us not ſleep as do others, but let us watch and be ſober; let us walk in the Light now, that we may e'er long come to the Light of everlaſting Life.

DISCOURSE XXII.

The GOSPEL for the *Epiphany*.

St. Matthew ii. 1——13.

When Jeſus was born in Bethlehem *of* Judea, *in the Days of* Herod *the King, behold there came wiſe Men from the* Eaſt *to* Jeruſalem, *ſaying, Where is he that is born King of the* Jews? *for we have ſeen his Star in the* Eaſt, *and are come to worſhip him*, &c.

AFTER the Shepherds, who were of the Race of the *Jews*, had, by the Direction of an Angel, been at *Bethlehem*, to ſee the new-born Meſſiah, there came ſoon after ſome wiſe Men from the *Eaſt*, of the Race of the *Gentiles*, by the Guidance of a Star to the ſame Place, upon the ſame Errand, to viſit and worſhip the new-born King of the *Jews, who was to be a Light to lighten the* Gentiles, *as well as the Glory of his People* Iſrael. An Account of whoſe Journy and Viſit we have in the Goſpel for this Day, which begins thus; *When Jeſus was born in* Bethlehem *of* Judea, *in the Days of* Herod *the King, there came wiſe Men from the Eaſt*, &c. Where we may obſerve,

Firſt, The time of their beginning their Journy, and that was, *when Jeſus was born*; they ſet forth from their Country on the Day of his Nativity, when the Star firſt appear'd, and they firſt beheld it, tho they came not to their Journy's end till this Day, which was twelve Days after.

Again, the time of this Expedition is deſcrib'd to be *in the Days of* Herod *the King*; when an *Idumæan* by Birth rul'd over the *Jews*, and conſequently when the Scepter was departed from *Judah*, the time appointed by *Jacob*'s Prophecy for *Shiloh*'s, that is, the *Meſſias*'s Coming, as we read *Gen.* 49. 10. then it was that *the wiſe Men came from the* Eaſt *to* Jeruſalem. Who theſe wiſe Men were,

and

and from whence they came, is variouſly conjectur'd by learned Men. Some ſuppoſe them to be Kings, who came from their ſeveral Countries to congratulate and do Homage to this new-born King, in whom both *Jew* and *Gentile* were to have an equal ſhare, and to be all united in this Prince of Peace: They who ſuppoſe them to be Kings, gather it partly from that Prophecy of *David*, Pſal. 72. 10, 11. *The Kings of* Tharſis *and the Iſles ſhall give Preſents, the Kings of* Arabia *and* Saba *ſhall bring Gifts; all Kings ſhall fall down before him, and all Nations ſhall do him Service*: Which Prophecy they take to refer to theſe wiſe Men, and to be fulfill'd in them. Again, they gather it partly from the great Reſpect that *Herod* the King ſhew'd to them, and the familiar Conference he had with them; and partly likewiſe from the great Treaſures they brought with them, and the noble Preſents that were offer'd by them; Preſents fit only for Kings to give, and for a King to receive.

Others again, by the wiſe Men, here underſtand, tho not Kings, yet Perſons eminent for their great Learning and Knowledg in all the liberal Arts and Sciences, eſpecially in that of Aſtronomy, and the Motions of the heavenly Bodies. The word in the Original is Μάγοι, Magicians, which was antiently a Name of great Honour and Reſpect, and had a very innocent and honourable ſignification; for they were the Prieſts, the Princes, the Counſellors, the Judges, and indeed the Oracles of the *Eaſtern* Countries: Tho ſince, by ſome Mens abuſing that noble Science by judicial Aſtrology, and prognoſticating future Events to impoſe upon the Ignorant and the Credulous, it is become a Term of Reproach and Infamy; which mov'd our Tranſlators to change that old odious Name of Magicians into this of the wiſe Men. This for the Perſons.

For the Place from whence they came, 'tis here ſaid that they *came from the* Eaſt *to* Jeruſalem. Now from what Parts of the *Eaſt* theſe Travellers came, is likewiſe variouſly conceiv'd: Some making them to come from *Arabia* and *Saba*, according to the Prophecy of *David*, Pſal. 72. 10. others from *Perſia* and *Chaldea*, where theſe Magicians moſtly inhabited; but theſe lying all Eaſtward from *Jeruſalem*, it is a Matter of no great Conſequence to be too ſollicitous about it.

But what was the Errand upon which they came? Why, that the next words declare; when they were come to *Jeruſalem*, they enquir'd, ſaying, *Where is he that is born*

King of the Jews? *for we have ſeen his Star in the* Eaſt, *and are come to worſhip him.* The Deſign of their Coming was to find out the new-born Saviour, whoſe Birth had been long expected, and was then made known to the World. The Signal that brought them thither, was the ſight of a new and unpommon Star, whoſe Guidance they follow'd, to the end that they might do their Homage, and pay their Adorations to him; which ſtill is, or ought to be, the great End of all our Coming to him.

But for the better clearing of this Matter, we muſt note, that about the time of our Saviour's Birth, there appear'd in the Heavens a new and ſtrange Star, which was never ſeen before, of a greater Brightneſs and different Motion from all other Stars: which theſe wiſe Men of the *Eaſt*, who were curious and well skill'd in Aſtronomy, obſerving, they were amaz'd, and caſt in their Mind what manner of Star this ſhould be that never appear'd before, concluding it to preſage ſomething of more than ordinary Conſideration; and calling to mind what they had heard and read of a new King to be born to the *Jews*, and particularly the Prophecy of *Balaam*, concerning a Star that ſhould go before and prefigure him, *Numb.* 24. 17. they concluded this Star to ſignify the Birth of the Meſſias, ſo long expected by the *Jews*. And having (as 'tis probably ſuppos'd) ſome Divine Revelation made to them about it, as they had about their Return into their own Country, they reſolv'd upon a Journy, to viſit and pay their early Devotions to him. At their ſetting forth, they ſoon perceiv'd this Star to go before them as a Guide, and that as well by Day as by Night, and ſo continu'd to conduct them to *Jeruſalem*. At their Coming there, the Star diſappear'd, which put them upon other Methods of Enquiry, ſaying, *Where is he that is born King of the* Jews? They doubted not the Truth of the thing, but only ask'd the Place where they might find him, in order to their doing Homage to him. But the Coming of theſe wiſe Men to *Jeruſalem*, and their making ſuch open and earneſt Enquiry after a new King, as alſo their declaring their ſight of a Star in the Heavens that led them there upon that Errand, began to raiſe great Jealouſies in the mind of *Herod* and all *Jeruſalem*: So the next words tell us, *When* Herod *the King had heard theſe things, he was troubled, and all* Jeruſalem *with him.* *Herod* was a Stranger King to that Nation, and the firſt that was not of the *Jewiſh* Line: and to hear

of

of one newly born King of the *Jews*, and finding many great and Wise Men come from far, enquiring where they might have access to and adore him; this could not but put *Herod* and all the People of the City into a general Consternation. *Herod* therefore fearing his being supplanted and undermined by this new Prince, *gather'd all the chief Priests and Scribes of the People together, and demanded of them, where Christ should be born*: He concealing his Design, gravely consulted the Sanhedrim and other learned Expositors of the Law and Prophets, what Place their Books assign'd for the Birth of their expected Messiah: They presently answer'd *and said unto him*, Bethlehem *of* Judah, *for thus it is written by the Prophet*; *And thou* Bethlehem *of the Land of* Judah, *art not the least among the Princes of* Judah, *for out of thee shall come a Governour that shall rule my People* Israel; *Micah* 5. 2. This still encreas'd his suspicion, which yet he wisely kept to himself, without any outward Discovery of it to any: and that he might learn as much as possible, *he privily call'd to him the Wise Men*; and to get what he could out of them, he first imparts to them the Place of this Saviour's Birth, which was *Bethlehem* a small City of *David*, about six or seven Miles distant from *Jerusalem*, and then *diligently enquired of them what time the Star appear'd*; that by a secret and punctual account of the first Appearance of the Star, he might know the Age of the Child, and thereby the better carry on and effect his bloody purpose. When this was done, he dismiss'd the Travellers, and *sent them to* Bethlehem, *saying unto them, Go and search diligently for the young Child, and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.* Where he wills them, after they had found this great Prince, in their return to take *Jerusalem* in their way, and to bring him Intelligence of it, that he might also pay his Duty to this Messiah and Heir of all Nations; seeking to cover his malicious Design under a colour of Devotion, and pretending to worship, when he intended to destroy him. However,

These *Eastern* Sages knowing nothing of *Herod*'s secret Purposes, took their leave of him; and *when they had heard the King, departed, and went on their Journy.* No sooner had they left that City in their way to *Bethlehem*, but the Star which disappear'd during their stay at *Jerusalem*, appear'd to them again, and directed them in their way; for, *Lo! the Star which they saw in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was.* The

celestial

celeſtial Guide, which had awhile withdrawn its Light from a City unworthy of it, ſhone out again upon them, and left them not till it brought them to the end of their intended Journy. This new Appearance of their former Director, fill'd them with no ſmall Delight and Exultation, and gave them a full Aſſurance of the good Succeſs and happy Event of their Expedition; for *when they ſaw the Star*, 'tis ſaid, *they rejoiced with exceeding great Joy*: Their Spirits were mightily reviv'd at the freſh ſight of their old Guide and Companion; the Star which occaſion'd their firſt ſetting out, being thereby fully ſatisfy'd, that God approv'd of and would proſper their Undertaking.

When they were come to *Bethlehem*, and the Place where the Divine Babe lay, *they went into the Houſe, and ſaw the young Child with* Mary *his Mother, and fell down and worſhipped him.* How this Star pointed out the Houſe where the young Child was, when the height and diſtance of the Stars muſt needs leave Men in great uncertainty, and no one City, much leſs one ſingle Houſe can be pitch'd upon by any particular Direction; how (I ſay) this could be, is a matter variouſly conjectur'd by learned Men. Some think that this Star left its Orb and deſcended lower, and ſo ſtood juſt over the Houſe. Others, that it kept its Station, and darted down a long Stream of Light, which pointed to the Houſe where he was: Others again, that whereas the Star moved along with them before, when they came to the Place it ceas'd its Motion, and ſtood ſtill, and thereby directed to it. St. *Chryſoſtom* and others of the Fathers, moſt probably think, that this was no real Star, but a new created Meteor or Comet in the Air, which moved along over their Heads, and ſo directed them, as the cloudy Pillar did the *Iſraelites* in the Wilderneſs, by its ſtanding ſtill at their coming to the Place. But however that be, moſt certain it is, that it led theſe wiſe Men to the Houſe where this new-born King was, whom tho they found in low and mean Circumſtances, yet that hinder'd not their humble Proſtrations and Adorations; for *they fell down and worſhipped him*, according to the Prediction, *Kings ſhall fall down before him, all Nations ſhall do him Reverence.* And having paid theſe Divine Honours and Homage to this Infant King, theſe great Perſons (for ſo we ſee theſe *Magi* or wiſe Men were) brought Preſents of the richeſt and moſt valuable Things of their Country, and offer'd them to him: ſo the next words tell us, *And when they had opened their*

Trea-

Treaſures, they preſented unto him Gifts, Gold, and Frankincenſe, and Myrrh. 'Twas the Cuſtom of the Oriental Sages, never to approach any great Perſonage without ſome Preſent; accordingly they here bring ſome of the beſt and moſt precious Gifts their Country was fam'd for, and preſented them to him. Hereby was fulfilled that Prophecy of the Pſalmiſt, *The Kings of* Arabia *and* Saba *ſhall bring Gifts*: And likewiſe that of the Prophet *Iſaiah*, which ſpecifies the Gifts, *Iſa.* 60. 6. *They ſhall bring Gold and Incenſe, and ſhall ſhew forth the Praiſes of the Lord.* We read that *Abraham* gave to the Sons of *Chetura*, Gold, Frankincenſe and Myrrh, which had been preſented to him by the Kings of *Sodom* and *Gomorrha*; ſuitable whereunto theſe *Arabians* preſented the ſame Gifts to Chriſt, the Seed of *Abraham*, at his Nativity. Hereunto ſome refer that of the Pſalmiſt, *Thy Garments ſmell of Myrrh, Aloes, and Caſſia*: As alſo that of *Solomon* in the *Canticles*, *A Bundle of Myrrh is my Beloved unto me*, Cant. 1. 13. Which things being ſo fragrant and odoriferous, could not but be an Offering of a ſweet-ſmelling Savour.

And now theſe *Eaſtern* Magi or Wiſe Men, having attain'd the End of their Journy, and fulfill'd the Errand they came about, by ſeeing the new-born King of the *Jews*, and doing their Homage and Devotion to him, they think of returning home to their own Country. But while they were muſing hereupon, they were in the Night before they ſet forth, *warned of God in a Dream, that they ſhould not return to* Herod, *but depart into their own Country another way; which they accordingly did.* God Almighty knew the malicious and murderous Intention of *Herod* towards this young rival King, and therefore prudently prevented and defeated it by this Diverſion; willing theſe Travellers not to go back by *Jeruſalem*, by which they came, nor to give *Herod* any Intelligence of the Child, as he deſired, but to make their neareſt and ſpeedieſt way home another way: and he who brought them thither to ſee his Son, would ſafely conduct them back to their own Homes. Thus we ſee the Progreſs of theſe *Eaſtern* Sages, as to their coming and going; the Guide that led them; the Errand on which they came, the Succeſs of their Journy, and their ſafe Return; all which are contain'd in the Goſpel for this Day: from which we may learn the following Leſſons. As,

1*ſt*,

1*ſt*, From the leading theſe Wiſe Men to Chriſt, we may learn to adore the great Grace and Goodneſs of God, in bringing in the *Gentiles* as well as the *Jews*, and uniting them both in one Body in Chriſt: This was one of the moſt glorious Myſteries of Divine Providence that was ever manifeſted to the Sons of Men, of which we ought to have the greater Senſe; becauſe we are deſcended from thoſe *Gentiles*, and partake of the ſame Bleſſings and Benefits with them. Theſe *Eaſtern* Sages were the Figures and Firſt-Fruits of us *Gentiles*, who tho once far off, are now brought nigh to God, and receiv'd into his Houſe and Family. Hereby the Promiſe made to *Abraham* was fulfill'd, that *in his Seed all the Nations of the Earth ſhould be bleſſed.* And likewiſe that Prophecy of *Jacob*, *To him ſhall the Gathering of the People be*; Gen. 49. 10. In which we being ſo nearly concern'd, we can never enough praiſe God, nor be ſufficiently thankful for it.

2*dly*, From God's leading theſe Wiſe Men or Aſtronomers to Chriſt by a Star, we may obſerve his great Wiſdom in giving them ſuch a Signal as was moſt likely to move, and work moſt powerfully upon them; for their Studies lying chiefly that way, it was more apt to lead and prevail with them than any other Miracle: Curioſity as well as Religion, would encline them to ſee the Event of that, to which by the Courſe of their Studies they were moſt naturally diſpos'd. A Viſion, a Prophecy, or a Voice from Heaven (as one hath well obſerv'd) might have ſignify'd the thing as plainly; but a Star did it to them in a more acceptable manner. The like courſe we find our Saviour after took to win Diſciples to him, *viz.* by adapting Arguments to their Tempers, Cuſtoms, and Employments. When Fiſhermen were to be converted, he did it by an extraordinary Draught of Fiſhes: when he was to draw the Multitude after him, he did it by feeding five Thouſand of them with five barly Loaves and a few little Fiſhes; and from thence led them to deſire the Bread of Life to feed their Souls to eternal Life: And here, when Men vers'd in Aſtronomy were to be brought to Chriſt, it was done by the Motion of a Star: which may teach us, among other Arts of Perſuaſion, to uſe the like Method upon the like Occaſions.

3*dly*, From the Star's diſappearing whilſt the Wiſe Men ſtaid at *Jeruſalem*, we may learn not to expect extraordinary

nary Means when ordinary Means may ſerve the turn. When theſe Wiſe Men were remote from *Jeruſalem*, and uncertain of their Way to it, a Star was neceſſary to direct them thither; but being come there, they might be otherwiſe inform'd in the Way to *Bethlehem*, and need no extraordinary Direction to bring them to Chriſt: whilſt we have God's holy Word and Sacraments, the ordinary Means of Salvation afforded to us, we may not look for Inſpirations or a Voice from Heaven; and having *Moſes* and the Prophets to acquaint us with the Will of God and a Future State, we are to hear them, without expecting one to come from the Dead for our better Information.

4thly, From the Star's appearing again after they left *Jeruſalem*, we may learn, that God is not wanting in giving all due Aſſiſtance and Encouragement in going unto Chriſt. When theſe Travellers found the People of *Jeruſalem* cold and careleſs about finding out or doing Homage to this new-born Prince, leſt they ſhould be diſcouraged, or abate their Zeal, God gave them their former Guide to conduct them to him. When ordinary Methods ſeem to fail, God will not leave us deſtitute of ſuch farther help as ſhall be neceſſary for us; his Grace ſhall be ſufficient to carry us through all Difficulties and Diſcouragements, if we are willing to know and go on in our Duty.

5thly, From the great Joy of theſe Travellers, when they ſaw the Star reſtor'd to them, we may learn to rejoice in the Light of the Goſpel, and be thankful for every Meaſure or Degree of Knowledg imparted to us. The *Day-Star from on high hath riſen*, and ſhines out upon us; let us therefore rejoice in the Light, and come into the Brightneſs of his riſing; let us walk and work by the Light, and then we ſhall have it more abundantly.

Laſtly, From theſe Wiſe Mens coming to Chriſt, and worſhipping of him, which was the wiſeſt thing they ever did, let us follow their Example in going to him, and in falling down to worſhip and kneel before him. As they open'd their Treaſures, and preſented him with the richeſt things they had, ſo let us open the Treaſures of our Hearts, and preſent our ſelves, both Body and Soul unto him; and by ſo doing, he will e'er long preſent both blameleſs and without ſpot to our heavenly Father. Which God grant, *&c.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE XXIII.

The EPISTLE for the First Sunday after the *Epiphany*.

ROM. xii. 1——6.

I beseech you therefore, Brethren, by the Mercies of God, that ye present your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable Service. And be not conform'd to this World, but be transform'd by the renewing of your Mind, &c.

HAVING celebrated the Nativity and Circumcision of our Blessed Saviour, together with his *Epiphany* or Manifestation to the *Gentiles*, the great Mercies to be remember'd in the late Festival of *Christmas*, our Church on this Sunday immediately following them, very fitly puts us upon making some return for these inestimable Favours. We read, that Wise Men of the Race of the *Gentiles*, came from the East by the Direction of a Star to *Bethlehem*, to do Homage to the new-born Son of God, and to present him with the most precious Things which their Countries afforded; as the Shepherds, by the Direction of an Angel, had before done in behalf of the *Jews*. And now it lies upon us to do something in like manner: To which end our Apostle here directs us, in consideration of God's Mercies, to make a Present of our selves to him.

The Collect for the Day beseeches God to accept of the Tribute and Acknowledgment of our Prayers that are offer'd up to him, and withal, to give us the Knowledg of his Will, with Grace and Power faithfully to perform it.

The Epistle for the Day *beseeches us to present our Bodies unto him as a living, holy, and acceptable Sacrifice, which is our reasonable Service.*

It hath been an antient Custom, which continues to this Day, in the beginning of a new Year, to make some Pre-

sent

ſent to our Friends and Benefactors, as a Token of that Love and Reſpect we bear them. In conformity to which Practice, our Church calls upon us at this time, to make a Preſent to God the Father, for ſending us his Son, the beſt Friend and Benefactor to Mankind the World ever had. And ſince Heaven hath made ſuch a noble and divine Preſent unto us, we ought in reaſon to think of preſenting ſomething back again; which if we will take the Apoſtle's Advice, is beſt done by dedicating and preſenting our ſelves to him, to begin the new Year with new Reſolutions of ſerving him, and to renew our Purpoſes of walking before him in newneſs of Life. *I beſeech you therefore* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *by the Mercies of God*, &c.

Indeed the Mercies of God are ſo many and great, that they may juſtly command and challenge the beſt Returns that we can make for them, which yet muſt fall infinitely ſhort of the Worth and Dignity of his Bleſſings. The general Mercies of Creation and Providence call for our daily Acknowledgments and our devouteſt Adorations; for *it is he that hath made us, and not we our ſelves*: and therefore *let us worſhip and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker*; giving our ſelves back again into his hands, out of which we came. Hence we find *Cain* and *Abel* in the very beginning of the World, bringing their ſeveral Preſents to their Maker; the one the Firſt-Fruits of the Earth, the other the Firſtlings of his Flock, and both in token of Gratitude to him that made them: which were the Original of all the Sacrifices and Oblations that follow'd after.

But the more peculiar Mercies of God, by which the Apoſtle here beſeeches us to devote our ſelves to him, are the ſignal Favours of our Redemption; ſuch as the Pardon of Sin, the Juſtification of our Perſons by Faith in Chriſt, and the Hopes of Life and Salvation, which are wholly founded on the Merits of his Death and Satisfaction: which Mercies are too great for any ſufficient Compenſation, and yet require ſomething to be render'd by way of Acknowledgment.

But what is the Preſent we are here directed to make to him? Why, not barely the Calves of the Lips, or the ſlender Sacrifice of the Tongue, which are too mean Oblations for ſuch Benefits: and curſed is he who having in his Flock a Male, ſhall offer unto the Lord a corrupt Thing. But we are to preſent unto the Lord the beſt that we have, and

and like *Æschines*, a poor Scholar of *Socrates*, who having no better thing to give, gave himself to his Master, as the best Requital he could make for his Care and Kindness. In like manner, the Apostle here minds us of the best Return we can make for the Mercies of God, and that is by presenting our Bodies unto him. Where the Body must not be understood separately, or exclusively of the Soul, as if the one would be accepted without the other; no, the Body without the Soul is but a heavy lumpish Carcase, a dead, and not a living Sacrifice, which will find no acceptance.

But the Body being the Mansion and Receptacle of the Soul, is in Scripture often us'd to signify both; and so to present our Bodies, is to present our selves, our whole Man, both Body and Soul unto him. For tho here mention is made of the Body only, yet we find God Almighty elsewhere calling chiefly for the Soul; *My Son give me thy Heart*; Prov. 23. 26. And our Saviour charges us to love him with all our Heart and with all our Soul: which alone gives life to it, and renders it an acceptable Sacrifice.

The truth is, our Bodies and Souls are both his; he made them by his Power, and redeem'd them with the Price of his own Blood, so that *we are not our own*, and must *therefore glorify him with our Souls and Bodies, which are both his*. For since we receive both from him, we are in Justice and Gratitude bound to return both to him. Beside,

Christ *gave himself for us*; he assum'd a Body like ours merely that he might suffer in it, and offer it up for us, and he likewise *made his Soul an offering for Sin*: and having liv'd and dy'd in both for our sake, how can we do less, than return both to him?

Now the Apostle, to encourage us thus to offer up our selves unto God, recommends it to us under a fourfold Consideration.

1*st*, As 'tis a *living Sacrifice*; partly in opposition to the dead Sacrifices, that were offer'd up under the Law; and partly in respect of the spiritual Life added to it by the Quicknings of the Spirit, in opposition to a spiritual Death in Trespasses and Sins.

2*dly*, This is here stil'd *a Holy Sacrifice*, and so it becomes by being dedicated unto God; for whatsoever is consecrated unto him, is thereby separated from common Uses, and appropriated to his Service, and so becomes holy unto the Lord.

3*dly*,

3*dly*, This is farther call'd an *acceptable Sacrifice unto God*, becauſe in giving our ſelves, we give all that we have to him; and God who accepteth according to what a Man hath, and not according to what he hath not, is ever well pleas'd with ſuch Sacrifices. Hence we read that the Widow's Mite caſt into the Treaſury, was more and better accepted, than the richer Preſents of wealthier Perſons, becauſe ſhe caſt in all that ſhe had. In like manner, the preſenting our ſelves unto God, is an Offering of a ſweet-ſmelling Savour, becauſe 'tis the beſt and all that we have.

4*thly*, This is moreover ſaid to be *our reaſonable Service*; either becauſe in preſenting our ſelves we offer up to him rational Creatures, and ſuch as are endow'd with a Mind and Reaſon, whereas the legal Sacrifices conſiſted only in offering up of brute Beaſts, that wanted that Perfection, and were void of all Reaſon; or elſe becauſe the preſenting our ſelves to him, is but juſt and agreeable to right Reaſon: for ſince God the Father hath given us his Son, and with him hath freely given us all things; and ſince God the Son hath given himſelf even to Death for us, 'tis highly fit and reaſonable, that we ſhould give our ſelves unto him, who hath ſo dearly bought us.

But how are we to preſent our Bodies unto God? Why, in that the following part of this Epiſtle will direct us. As,

1*ſt*, We are to preſent our Bodies unto God, by preſerving the Purity of them, and keeping them free from the Pollutions of the World. To this we are exhorted in the next Verſe, *And be not conform'd to this World, but be transform'd by the renewing of your Mind; that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect Will of God.* Where we are caution'd againſt Conformity with the World, that we may be the more conformable to the Nature and Will of God. But here we muſt note, that the Apoſtle, in willing us not to conform to this World, doth not require us to abandon all Company and Commerce with the Men of this World, for then, as he elſewhere tells us, we muſt go out of the World; or retire into Defarts and Solitudes, which would be to flee from the Enemy, that we are to face and vanquiſh. Nor does it forbid all Compliance with the innocent Cuſtoms and Converſation of the World: for God having made us ſociable Creatures, hath thereby oblig'd us to all the decent Rules and Orders of Society; and to do otherwiſe, ſavours more of the Moroſeneſs of a

Phariſee, than the Meekneſs of a good Chriſtian. Nor yet does this Nonconformity to the World, condemn all the innocent Modes and Faſhions of the World in point of Attire: for tho the Word μη συσχηματίζεσθε in the Original ſeem to refer to the outward Scheme, Figure and Faſhions of the World, which hath made ſome expound it ſo, as to condemn all varying of Dreſſes, and following of new and changeable Faſhions; yet theſe put too ſtrict a Senſe upon the Word, which relates more to the Courſe and Faſhion of Mens Lives and Manners, than to the Faſhion of their Habits or Garments, which vary according to the difference of Time, Places, and Countries. Indeed, where theſe things are made the Inſtruments of Luſt, and adminiſter to Pride and Vanity, they then become ſinful, and are a piece of that Nonconformity to the World, which we are to obſerve and practiſe. But becauſe the Evil of theſe things lies more in the Heart, than in the outward Garb, and a Beggar may be more proud and wanton in his Rags, than a good Chriſtian in finer and more faſhionable Attire; we may not paſs too hard a Cenſure on theſe things, nor think all Compliance in theſe innocent Matters to be abſolutely and univerſally condemn'd.

But what then is that Nonconformity to the World, that is here forbidden? Why, the World is in Scripture frequently taken for the Vices, evil Cuſtoms, and wicked Practices of the World: in which ſenſe St. *John* tells us, that the *whole World lies in Wickedneſs*; and hath ſumm'd up all that is in it, under three Heads, *viz. the Luſt of the Fleſh, the Luſt of the Eye, and the Pride of Life.* Theſe are the Charms or fiery Darts, with which the World daily aſſaults and wounds the Hearts of many.

Now as to conform to the World, is to yield to theſe Temptations, and to be led away by the Baits and Allurements of the World; ſo not to conform to the World, is to reſiſt all theſe Charms, to turn the deaf Ear to all bad Counſel and Company, and not to ſuffer our ſelves to be corrupted or carry'd away by the Wiles or Temptations of either. In ſhort, not to be conform'd to the World, is to abandon the evil Principles, and ſinful Practices of it; not to embrace bad Opinions, tho much in vogue, nor follow bad Examples, tho they may be many and great; but to chuſe rather to walk in the ſolitary Paths of Vertue, than to follow a Multitude to do evil.

But

But what is it to *be transform'd by the renewing of the Mind?* the Word in the Original is μεταμορφοῦσθε, which ſignifies a Metamorphoſis or Change of the whole Man, whereby it is turn'd from bad Habits and Cuſtoms, to better Deſires and Diſpoſitions: and this is here ſaid to be done *by the renewing of the Mind*; that is, by altering the whole Bent and Inclination of the Soul, that whereas it was before carried out and ſet only on earthly Objects, it is now fix'd chiefly on Heaven and Heavenly Things, and brought to deſire nothing in compariſon of them: by which it comes *to prove what is the good, acceptable, and perfect Will of God*, ſo as to prefer and follow it before and above all other things.

If then we would preſent our Bodies unto God, ſo as to make them a holy and acceptable Sacrifice, we muſt keep them pure from the corrupt Practices and Pollutions of the World, not *making the Members of Chriſt to become the Members of an Harlot*, but *poſſeſſing our Veſſels in Sanctification and Honour*; that our Members be no longer *Inſtruments of Sin, but Inſtruments of Righteouſneſs unto God*: ſo will they become the undefil'd Manſions of the Son of God, and be conſecrated as the Temples of the Holy Ghoſt. And becauſe our Souls too are to be preſented with them, we muſt labour to have them ſanctify'd and renew'd by the Graces of the Holy Spirit, that being transform'd into the Image of God, they may be a fit Preſent for him. And this is the firſt way of preſenting our ſelves unto him.

The Second is, by the Lowlineſs and Humility both of Body and Mind: And to this we are exhorted in the next Verſe; *For I ſay, thro the Grace given to me, to every Man that is among you, not to think of himſelf more highly than he ought to think, but to think ſoberly, according as God hath dealt to every Man the Meaſure of Faith.* He that will dedicate himſelf to God, muſt not think too highly of himſelf, for that will create ſuch a Self-ſufficiency, as will make him think he hath no need to ſeek to, or depend upon any other; and he that will demean himſelf, as becomes him towards others, muſt think ſoberly of himſelf, leſt he be drawn to overlook and deſpiſe thoſe that are far above him. Pride and Arrogance are the great Obſtacles of all true Devotion, for they hinder Men from giving themſelves to God, or receiving any good Thing from him. *He that exalteth himſelf* (ſaith our Saviour) *ſhall be abas'd; and he that humbleth himſelf, ſhall be exalted.* The way to

riſe in God's Favour, is to be low in our own Eyes; for *God reſiſteth the Proud, and ſheweth Grace and Favour to the Humble.* He filleth the Hungry, that depend upon him, with good things, when the Rich, and they that are full of themſelves, are ſent empty away. He that overvalues himſelf, ſets a high price upon nothing; and ſuch as will not part with or preſent their Bodies and Souls unto God, which are both his, will in the end loſe both. And therefore the Apoſtle, to incline Men to make this Preſent of themſelves unto God, exhorts them not to entertain any high Thoughts of themſelves, which will beget ſuch a Fondneſs, as will render them averſe to make any Offering of themſelves even unto the Lord; but to think meanly and ſoberly of themſelves, *according as God hath given to every one the Meaſure of Faith*: for God dealeth out his Gifts in various Meaſures and Proportions on the Sons of Men; to ſome he giveth more, to others leſs, to all ſome; which they are to uſe not for Vanity or Oſtentation, but to promote the Glory of God, and the Good of one another. And to check all Pride and Preſumption in themſelves, they are often told that theſe various Bleſſings diſtributed among them, are but Gifts and Largeſſes, proceeding entirely from the free Grace and Bounty of their Maker, not Debts due to their Merits, or beſtow'd upon them for their own Worthineſs. Hence the Apoſtle, to keep Men humble and lowly-minded under the higheſt Attainments, asks the Queſtion, *What haſt thou, O Man, which thou haſt not receiv'd? And if thou haſt receiv'd it, why boaſteſt thou thy ſelf, as if thou receivedſt it not?* Moreover,

Laſtly, To hinder the Swelling and Impoſtumation of the Mind, and to keep Men from being pufft and lifted up above their Brethren, the next words mind them of the mutual Need and Dependence they all ſtand in one towards another: *For as we have many Members in one Body, and all Members have not the ſame Office; ſo we being many, are one Body in Chriſt, and every one Members one of another.* Where the Apoſtle, by an Alluſion to the natural Body, ſhews the reaſon of the Diverſity of Gifts, and the different Meaſures of Faith granted to the ſeveral Members of Chriſt's Church, together with the ſeveral Duties and Dependence of each upon the reſt. For as there are many Members in the natural Body, ſo are there in the myſtical Body of Chriſt; and as all the Members of the natural Body have not the ſame Office, but have different Functions

tions and Operations, as the Neceſſities of the Body require; ſo neither have all the Members of Chriſt's Church the ſame Office, but have different Functions and Employments, and likewiſe different Degrees and Meaſures of Gifts, as the Wants of the Church and Mens ſeveral Places in it call for. And as all the Members are united in one Body without Diviſion or Separation, ſo we being many, are or ought to be one Body in Chriſt, of which he is the Head, and we as Fellow-Members in reſpect of one another. By all which, the Apoſtle would ſubdue all Pride, Contention, and Separation in the Church of Chriſt, and inſtil the great Leſſons of Humility, Peace, and Unity among all its Members.

Thus we ſee the Drift and Deſign of the Epiſtle for this Day, together with the ſeaſonable and important Duties it recommends to us; which, by way of Application, I muſt remind and inculcate upon you. And,

1ſt, Let me, as the Apoſtle here doth, intreat and exhort you *by the Mercies of God*, eſpecially thoſe we remember at this ſeaſon, *to preſent your Bodies unto him, as a living, holy, and acceptable Sacrifice:* which will be return'd to you better than he receiv'd it, refin'd from all Impurity and Imperfection, and made like unto his glorious Body. Let us then devote both Body and Soul unto him, with all the Powers and Faculties of each, to be employ'd in his Service: this is an Oblation that the pooreſt may make, and yet is more acceptable than any other thing that the richeſt can offer. Let none ſay, he hath nothing to give, when he hath himſelf to beſtow; which is a Sacrifice of a more grateful Savour, than the ſweeteſt Incenſe or Perfumes. 'Tis true indeed, thou haſt nothing of thy own to give, for both thy Body and Soul are his already; and yet he is pleas'd to accept at thy hands his own Gifts, and none (one would think) ſhould grudg to give him that: he asks nothing but what he hath many ways a right and title to, and yet he is not only delighted with, but rewards the Return of that which was his own before. And who that hath any Senſe or Reaſon, but muſt think that to be *a reaſonable Service?*

Let us therefore give, or rather reſtore our ſelves back again unto the Lord, not living to our ſelves, but to him who gave himſelf for us, to redeem us from all Iniquity. Let us conſecrate our Bodies as ſo many living Temples

unto him, and let all the Members of them become the Inſtruments of his Honour. Let the Mouth praiſe him with joyful Lips, and the Tongue ſing of his Honour; let the Hands be often liſted up to him, and open'd in bounty to his Members. Let the Feet walk in his Ways, and run with Cheatfulneſs the Paths of his Commandments.

And to compleat the Sacrifice, let us dedicate our Souls to him as the living Monuments of his Praiſe, and devote all the Faculties of them to the ſetting forth of his Glory. To which end,

2*dly*, Let both be kept pure from the Defilements of the World, to attend the Service of their Maker; avoiding all ſinful Conformity to the World, in the Vices, Errors, and wicked Practices of it, and having our Natures renew'd by the Graces of the Holy Spirit, our Minds enlighten'd with the Knowledg of God, our Wills and Affections rectify'd to the loving and obeying of him; and in a word, to have our whole Man transform'd into the Image of God, from Glory to Glory. Again,

3*dly*, Let us learn from our Saviour to be *meek and lowly in Heart*, not thinking more highly of our ſelves than we ought to think; but to think ſoberly and modeſtly, in honour preferring one another: for Wiſdom and Happineſs will be to the Humble, but Folly and Ruin will attend the Proud.

Laſtly, Let us learn to live in the Unity and Communion of the Church, as the only means of living in Love, Peace, and Amity with one another. For the Church being but one Body, there ſhould be no Schiſm or Diviſion in it; but all the Members are to be join'd and united in it in one Communion under Chriſt the Head, that they may be fitted for the Communion of the Saints for ever in Heaven: which God grant, *&c.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE XXIV.

The GOSPEL for the first Sunday after *Epiphany*.

St. Luke ii. 41, to the end.

Now his Parents went to Jerusalem *every Year at the Feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve Years old, they went up to* Jerusalem, *after the Custom of the Feast*, &c.

THE foregoing Gospels concerning our Saviour, related what happen'd before, at, and after his Birth, whilst he was in the state of Infancy; and our late Discourses upon them, left him with *Mary* and *Joseph* at *Bethlehem* in an Inn, with the Babe lying in his Cradle of a Manger, where even at that Age he was ador'd by Angels, visited by the Shepherds, worshipped by the Wisemen that came from the East, and magnify'd by all that came near him. Here they remain'd till *Herod*, jealous of this new-born King, and fearing what might happen to him and his Kingdom hereby, cast about him how he might destroy this holy Infant. Of which *Joseph* being warn'd by an Angel in a Dream, and commanded to take the Child and his Mother, and to flee into *Egypt*, he accordingly did it, taking the young Child and his Mother by night, and departing into *Egypt*. Immediately after their Departure, *Herod* executed his intended Cruelty, slaying all the Male Children in *Bethlehem*, hoping thereby to have slain our Lord; but God protected him, by timely sending him away, and by his safe Arrival in *Egypt*, where he staid till the Death of *Herod*. After which, *Joseph* was commanded by an Angel to return again to his own Country; and accordingly they return'd thence, and came to *Nazareth* in *Galilee*, where we read little or nothing of him, till he came to be twelve years old: and of what happen'd to him then, we have an account in the Gospel for this Day; which begins thus:

Now his Parents went every Year to Jeruſalem *at the Feaſt of the Paſſover; and when he was twelve Years old, they went up to* Jeruſalem, *after the Cuſtom of the Feaſt.* For the better underſtanding of theſe words, we muſt note, that there was a Law of God in being at that time, requiring all Males to repair to *Jeruſalem* three times in a year, at the three great Feaſts of the Paſſover, Pentecoſt, and the Feaſt of Tabernacles. Of which Law we read, *Exod.* 23. 14, 15, *&c.* where they are commanded to appear in the Temple, and to bring their Offerings and Sacrifices at thoſe ſolemn times. And the ſame Law was renew'd again, *Deut.* 16. 16. where the ſame thing is requir'd at the ſame ſeaſons. Of this Law, *Joſeph* and *Mary*, being devout and religious Perſons, were punctual Obſervers; for 'tis here ſaid, they *went to* Jeruſalem *every Year at the ſolemn Feaſts.* And here we may note farther, that tho the Law requir'd only the Males to attend at thoſe ſeaſons, and thoſe too only from twenty Years old to ſixty, and ſo Women and Children were diſpens'd with from taking thoſe Journies; yet at the great Paſchal Feaſt, call'd the Paſſover, or the Feaſt of unlevened Bread, it was uſual from antient times, for the Women and their Children, as well as Men, to go up thither; as we read, 1 *Sam.* 1. 3, 4. where 'tis ſaid, that Elkanah *with his two Wives and Sons went up out of his City yearly to worſhip.* Accordingly the Evangeliſt here tells us, that *Mary* and *Joſeph*, with their Son being *twelve Years old, went up to* Jeruſalem, *according to the Cuſtom of the Feaſt.* Where being come, he obſerv'd the Feaſt, in all the Ceremonies of it, with great Diligence and Devotion. The Report of the *Magi* and the Doctors of the *Jews* aſſembled by *Herod*, had carry'd the Fame of him to *Jeruſalem* long before; and many there, by his tranſcendent Knowledg and extraordinary Wiſdom far above his Years, diſcern'd him to be a Divine Perſon: which yet he endeavour'd as yet to conceal, and ſo demean'd himſelf with great Modeſty and Diſcretion.

When they had fulfill'd the days, that is, when the Feaſt was ended, as *Joſeph* and *Mary return'd, the Child Jeſus tarried behind in* Jeruſalem, *and* Joſeph *and his Mother knew not of it.* This Son of God, in obedience to his Will, ſecretly withdrew himſelf from his earthly Parents, to mind the buſineſs of his heavenly Father. And accordingly, when they were departed, his Zeal and Fervour carry'd him back to the Temple, where he abode for three days.

But

But his Parents *supposing him to have been in the Company*, and going a little before with some of his Kindred and Friends, made the more haste after him, to overtake him in the way, and so *went on a day's journy* homeward; and at night *sought him among their Kinsfolk and Acquaintance*, but found him not. And here the Parents, the tender Mother especially, missing her dear and holy Child, began (as we may easily imagine) to be in great fear and sollicitude about him; they cast in their Minds a thousand Doubts, where and how he might be, fearing that some had waylaid him, to execute their bloody and malicious Designs upon him, and blaming their own Negligence in not more carefully attending on him, whom God had so honour'd, and entrusted to their Guardianship. These and many more such sad Thoughts afflicted their troubled Minds. Here some have represented the Blessed Virgin as shedding many a Tear, and fetching many deep Sighs, complaining with the Spouse in the *Canticles*, *By night I sought him whom my Soul loveth; I sought him, but I found him not: I will rise now, and go about the City in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my Soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.* Cant. 3. 1, 2.

But what course did they take, after all this Sorrow and Sadness, to find him? Why, the next words tell us, that *when they found him not, they turned back to* Jerusalem, *seeking him.* Missing him that night upon the Road, they rose early the next morning, and return'd back with speed to *Jerusalem*; where, with the Spouse in the *Canticles*, they went about the streets and broad ways of the City, to seek him whom their Souls loved, but found him not: at night repairing to their former Lodging, neither there could they hear any tidings of him, which made them pass that night also in very great heaviness and melancholy. The next morning bethinking with themselves of the Piety and Devoutness of his Temper, they repair'd to the Temple, which he ever held in great veneration; and there they happily found him. What Transports and Extasies of Joy they felt within them, at the sight and meeting of him, is a matter better to be conceiv'd than express'd.

Now in the Temple about the outward Court, there were certain Porches or Chambers, where the Goods and Treasure of the Temple were laid up; and likewise several Rooms, where the Doctors expounded the Law unto the People, and instructed the Youth in Learning; dis-

puting

puting among themſelves, and ſtating any hard Queſtions that were mov'd or offer'd to them; as we may gather from *Jer.* 35. 2, 4. & Chap. 36. 12, 26. Here it was that the Holy Child Jeſus, after his withdrawing from his Parents, betook himſelf; and here 'tis ſaid they found him, *ſitting in the midſt of the Doctors, both hearing and asking them Queſtions.* This young Lord hearken'd with great Attention to the Lectures and Diſcourſes of the Doctors, ſometimes moving Queſtions to them, as concerning *John*'s Baptiſm, whether it was from Heaven or of Men? and concerning Chriſt's being the Son of *David*, asking, from *David*'s calling him Lord, how he could be his Son? And when he found that theſe and the like Queſtions put them hard to it to reſolve, he anſwer'd them himſelf, inſomuch that *all that heard him were aſtoniſh'd at his Underſtanding and Anſwers.* They admir'd him at that Age, and plainly perceiv'd there was ſomething in him that was divine and extraordinary, ſhewing at once the Modeſty of a Child, and the Gravity and Authority of a Lawgiver ſent from Heaven.

At this time his Parents, who had been in great Concern and Queſt for him, happen'd to come in, *and when they ſaw him, they were amaz'd:* between the Trouble of ſeeking him, and the Joy of finding him where he was, they were almoſt beſide themſelves, and ſcarce knew what they ſaid or did; but after a little Recollection, his Mother ſaid unto him, *Son, why haſt thou thus dealt with us? behold thy Father and I have ſought thee ſorrowing.* The Fondneſs of the Mother could hardly bear his leaſt Abſence from her, and her tender Affection would ſcarce endure him out of her ſight: which Jeſus perceiving, made him by degrees to wean her from him, ſometimes withdrawing a while from her, as he did here at *Jeruſalem*; and when ſhe declar'd the Care and Grief ſhe ſuſtain'd in ſeeking him, he with ſome ſmall Reſentment, mix'd with abundance of Affection and Duty, reply'd, *How is it that ye ſought me, wiſt ye not that I muſt be about my Father's Buſineſs?* which is as if he had ſaid, Having heard ſo many Witneſſes of me, by the Angels and others, that I came from God, ought you not to know that I muſt do the Work of him that ſent me? The Temple being my Father's Houſe, is my proper Home, and there muſt I attend the Buſineſs that he hath ſet me. The ſame he told his Diſciples elſewhere, ſaying, *I muſt work the Works of my Father that ſent me*; John 9. 4.

That

That as the Father gave me Commandment, so I do; John 14. 31. And John 18. *For this cause came I into the World, to bear witness to the Truth*: which he here began to do in the Temple among the Doctors, and that by his Father's special Order and Appointment.

Now this Reply of his to his Parents was as much above their Understanding, as it was beside their Expectation: They knew well enough whom he meant by the Father, but did not so well understand the Work and Business he discours'd of; the great Mysteries and Counsels of God about Man's Redemption, being not yet reveal'd to them, nor those things in particular which our Lord was to do and suffer to that end. So the Evangelist here tells us, that *they understood not the Saying which he spake unto them*, tho he afterward expounded it unto them, and let them know all, as occasion requir'd: Of which the holy Mother took so great Notice, that 'tis said, *She kept all these and other his Sayings in her Heart.* She let none of his Words to slip out of her Mind, or to fall to the Ground, but carefully weigh'd and treasur'd them up in her Heart. So the Evangelists often tell us, that *Mary* ponder'd and consider'd these things, digested them by Silence and deep Meditation, and laid them up in her Heart; when her Sister *Martha* was *cumber'd about* many worldly and unnecessary Matters, *Mary chose the better Part, that should never be taken from her*: She minded the one thing necessary; and tho she had the Honour to be the Mother of our Lord, yet was she more blessed by receiving his Word into her Heart, than by conceiving his Body in her Womb.

And now *Joseph* and *Mary* having done what they went for at *Jerusalem*, they with their Son *went down to* Galilee, *and came to their own City* Nazareth; where we read but little of him, till he enter'd upon the publick Exercise of his prophetick Office: only St. *Luke* here tells us, that *he was subject to his Parents*, and that *he increas'd in Wisdom and Stature, and in Favour with God and Man.*

As for his Subjection to his Parents, he was highly dutiful and obedient to them in all things, save only in those, in which he ow'd a greater Duty to a higher Parent, even his Father in Heaven. And tho he did something without the leave of his Parents, in staying behind them in the Temple; yet being sent there by God, to prepare him for his Office, to whom Obedience is due before any earthly Parents, it could be no Act of Disobedience to his Mother,

but

but of Duty to his Heavenly Father; but in all other things, that did not interfere with the Will of God, or the Deſign of his Coming, he liv'd in perfect Obedience to them.

As for his *increaſing in Wiſdom and Stature, and in favour with God and Man*, we muſt note, that Chriſt, in his human Nature, conſiſted of a Soul and Body as we do, and that he grew up and improv'd in both, in like manner, with us; in his Soul he increas'd in Wiſdom, in his Body in Stature, and in both in Favour with God and Man. His Increaſe in Wiſdom, was his Improvement in the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit; ſo we read in the 40th Verſe of this Chapter, that *the Child grew, and waxed ſtrong in Spirit, filled with Wiſdom, and the Grace of God was upon him:* where the Child's growing, ſignifies his increaſing in Stature of Body; his waxing ſtrong in Spirit, is interpreted by his being fill'd with Wiſdom; and the Grace of God being upon him, implies his being in favour with God and Man. So was it ſaid of *Samuel* before him, that *the Child* Samuel *grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and alſo with Men*; 1 Sam. 2. 26.

Moreover, we read elſewhere, that during his Abode in *Nazareth*, he aſſiſted his reputed Father *Joſeph* in his Trade and manual Employment, to leave behind him an Example of Induſtry and Diligence in an honeſt Calling or Occupation.

Beſides, St. *Luke* tells us, that being grown up, he frequented the Synagogues of the *Jews* every Sabbath-Day: Luke 4. 16. *When he came to* Nazareth, *where he was brought up, as his Cuſtom was, he went to the Synagogue on the Sabbath-Day, and ſtood up for to read.* Upon which words a very learned Author tells us, that it was his conſtant Cuſtom to go with his Parents to the publick Synagogue of *Nazareth*, as his Pariſh-Church, every Sabbath-Day; where he ſometimes read himſelf, and withal join'd with the Congregation, as a Member of it, in the other Parts of Divine Service; adding, that he punctually obſerv'd all the Rites and Ceremonies of the Synagogue-Worſhip, yea tho the People of *Nazareth* were none of the beſt, as appears by that proverbial Speech, *Can any Good come out of* Nazareth? yet he made no Separation, upon the vain Pretences of greater Purity, and more ſpiritual Worſhip, but continu'd a Member in conſtant Communion with them, during his Stay there. By which our Saviour hath cut off

all

all Pretences to Separation, to which he never gave the least Countenance either by his Doctrine or Example, but ever sharply condemn'd and reprehended them in both.

This is briefly the Sum and Substance of the Gospel for this Day, from which we may learn some useful and necessary Lessons. As,

1*st*, From *Joseph* and *Mary*'s punctual observing the Feast of the Passover, and their yearly repairing with their Child to *Jerusalem* to that end, we may learn diligently to attend the Seasons of God's Holy Word and Sacraments, and not to forsake the assembling our selves together at the times appointed for them, as the manner of some is. We see what great Pains these devout Persons took in long and frequent Journeys to serve God, according to his Command; and shall we think it much to go almost next door to pay our Duty and Homage to our Maker in his own House? What greater or better Patterns can we have to follow in this matter, than those of the Son of God, and his religious Parents? And if they would not neglect the Times, Places, and Manner of God's Worship, which he commanded them; how inexcusable shall we be, who pretend to love and imitate them, if we neglect or contemn either? Under the Law, if any refus'd to observe the Feast of the Passover, that Soul was to *be cut off from among the People*, Exod. 12. 19. of how much sorer Punishment must they be thought worthy, who neglect a much better Feast under the Gospel? The Passover was but a Shadow or Figure of the Lord's Supper; and the Paschal Lamb, slain in the former, was but a Type of the Lamb of God slain in the latter, to take away the Sins of the World. And if they escap'd not, who refus'd to observe *Moses*'s Law, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation? The Son of God declares himself to be the *living Bread*, that came down from Heaven, and can alone *feed our Souls to eternal Life*; *his Flesh is Meat indeed, and his Blood is Drink indeed*, and both infinitely excel the Manna, and all the other Provisions which *Moses* gave to the *Israelites*: and therefore to withdraw from this sacred Feast, is not only an Indignity offer'd to our Saviour, but a great Injury to our own Souls, by withholding from them their proper Food; which is a Matter fit to be consider'd and amended by all wilful Contemners of God's Holy Word and Sacraments.

2*ly*, From

2*ly*, From this Holy Child's leaving his Parents to be about his Father's Buſineſs, we may learn to leave Father and Mother, to do the Will of our Heavenly Father. Hereby he hath taught us, how little any Relations of Kindred are to be regarded, when they prove Letts or Hindrances to true Piety and the Service of God; and of ſuch Diſingagement from Parents, he after gave many other Inſtances upon ſeveral Occaſions. If our neareſt Relations would either obſtruct us in our Duty, or encourage us in any Vice or Immorality, they therein forfeit their Authority, and loſe all Right to our Obedience in ſuch Matters; and therefore our Saviour told his Diſciples, that *he that loveth Father and Mother more than him, is not worthy of him:* yea, we are commanded rather to hate Father and Mother, than liſten to their Advice, when their Commands happen to claſh and interfere with our Duty to our Maker. This he taught us by his own Example, and this all his Precepts oblige us to.

3*ly*, From Chriſt's being ſubject to and obſervant of his Parents in all other things, Children may learn to be dutiful and obedient to their Parents in every thing, that is not contrary to the Will and Commands of God. This God and Nature teaches them, next to their heavenly Father, to be ſubject to them, from whom they receive their Being; and in all things, wherein he hath not interpos'd to the contrary, to be directed by them: neither will any vain Pretences of Sinfulneſs or Sanctity prove a ſufficient Plea or Excuſe for their Diſobedience.

4*ly*, From the Son of God's increaſing in Wiſdom and Stature, we may learn the Truth of his Humanity, that he grew up by the ſame degrees both in Body and Mind, as we do: He was fed by the ſame Nouriſhment of Meat and Drink, as we are; he improv'd in Knowledg and Experience by the ſame Means and Meaſures of Education, and arriv'd at Strength and Stature of Body by the ſame Steps as we do; which ſhew'd him to be truly Man, as we are: which is to be believ'd againſt a ſort of Hereticks, who affirm'd him to have aſſum'd only a Body of Air, in which he appear'd for a while, and then vaniſh'd away.

Laſtly, From his increaſing in favour with God and Man, we may learn how to attain to the ſame; he did it by his Obedience and Submiſſion to the Will of God, and by Acts of Prudence, Meekneſs, and Charity towards Men, which made him highly pleaſing and belov'd of both. And

we too, by doing things acceptable to God and Men, that is, by obſerving our Duty to God, and ſhewing Mercy, and Kindneſs, and Good-will towards Men, ſhall likewiſe find the ſame. To this purpoſe *Solomon* adviſes, *Let not Mercy and Truth forſake thee, but bind them about thy Neck, and write them upon the Table of thine Heart; ſo ſhalt thou find Favour and good Underſtanding in the ſight of God and Men:* Prov. 3. 3, 4. The Primitive Chriſtians are ſaid, by *praiſing God in the Temple, to find favour among Men*; Acts 2. 47. And St. *Paul* aſſures us, that *he that in theſe things ſerveth Chriſt, is acceptable to God, and approv'd of Men*: Rom. 14. 18. By all which we ſee how to attain to the Benefit and Comfort of this Life, and to be made eternally happy in the next; which God grant, *&c.*

DISCOURSE XXV.

The EPISTLE for the Second Sunday after the *Epiphany.*

Rom. xii. 6——16.

Having then Gifts, differing according to the Grace given unto us; whether Prophecy, let us propheſy according to the proportion of Faith; or Miniſtry, let us wait on our Miniſtring; or he that teacheth, on Teaching; or he that exhorteth, on Exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with Simplicity; he that ruleth, with Diligence, &c.

THE Collect for this Day beſeeches God, who doth govern all things in Heaven and Earth, mercifully to hear the Supplications of his People, and to grant them his Peace all the Days of their Life.

The Epiſtle begins where that for the foregoing Sunday ended; in the cloſe of which, the Apoſtle makes a Compariſon between the myſtical Body of Chriſt's Church, and the Body natural: in which, as there are many Members, and all the Members have not the ſame Office; ſo we being

ing many, are one Body in Chriſt, and every one Members one of another. And then follow theſe words, *Having then Gifts, differing according to the meaſure of Grace given to us, whether Prophecy*, &c. Where we may obſerve,

1*ſt*, The different Offices and Functions, wherein Chriſt hath ſet the ſeveral Members of his Church, according to the different Meaſures of Grace and Favour given to them; as propheſying, miniſtring, teaching, exhorting, giving, ruling, and the like. As for *propheſying*, that is generally taken, in the Old Teſtament, for foretelling future Events; God Almighty, for ſundry Reaſons, endowing the Prophets with a power of foretelling things to come. In the New Teſtament it is generally taken for expounding the Holy Scriptures, as might be ſhew'd in ſundry Places of it. As for *Miniſtring*, that is frequently taken for the Office of a Deacon, who is to miniſter in ſome inferiour Offices of the Church, and to aſſiſt the Prieſt in the higher Miniſtrations. As for *Teaching*, that refers to the inſtructing the People in the knowledg of Divine Truths, and relates chiefly to the Office of a Catechiſt, who is to teach Children and Youth the Principles of Religion. As for *Exhorting*, that properly belongs to the Office of the Prieſt, who is to build upon the foregoing Foundation, and to preſs upon the People the great Duties of Religion, by way of Doctrine and Exhortation. As for *Giving*, that relates to all the good Offices of Humanity and Charity. As for *Ruling*, that refers to the Office of the Biſhop and the ſuperiour Paſtors of the Church, who are to ſet things in order in the Houſe of God, and to overſee and rule the Flock of Chriſt. Theſe are the ſeveral Offices and Functions here mention'd by the Apoſtle; by which we ſee that the Members of Chriſt's Body, as well as the Members of the Natural Body, have not all the ſame Office, but have each their ſeveral Stations and Employments: And therefore the Apoſtle asks the Queſtion, *Are all Apoſtles? Are all Prophets? Are all Teachers? Do all ſpeak with Tongues? Do all interpret? No*, ſaith he, *he gave ſome Apoſtles, ſome Prophets, ſome Evangeliſts, ſome Paſtors, and ſome Teachers, for the edifying the Body of Chriſt:* 1 Cor. 12. 28, 29. Eph. 4. 11.

2*ly*, We may obſerve, that as God hath plac'd Men in different Offices and Functions, ſo hath he given *different Gifts, and ſeveral Meaſures* of Grace for the Diſcharge of them. So the ſame Apoſtle tells us, in that forecited Chapter,

Chapter, *There are Diversities of Gifts, but the same Spirit, and there are Differences of Administration, but the same Lord; for to one is given the Word of Wisdom, to another the Word of Knowledg by the same Spirit; to another Faith, to another the Gift of Prophecy, to another the discerning of Spirits, to another divers kinds of Tongues, to another the Interpretation of Tongues: but all these worketh that one and the same Spirit, dividing to every one severally as he will.* 1 Cor. 12. 4, 5, and following Verses. This is *the having Gifts, differing according to the Grace given to us.*

3*ly*, We may observe farther the Manner how these Gifts are to be us'd and exercis'd, and that is, with all Fidelity and Diligence, to the promoting the Glory of God, and the Good of his Church and People; for *the Manifestation of the Spirit is given to every Man to profit withal,* 1 Cor. 12. 7. And we are here bid faithfully to discharge our Office, by a due exercise of the Gifts given us to that end. He that *propheseth*, or expoundeth the Holy Scriptures, must do it *according* to the *Analogy or Proportion of Faith*, that is, according to the Measure or Rule of Faith, summ'd up in the Apostles Creed, without adding to, or taking from it.

He that *ministreth*, or is call'd to the Office of a Deacon, or some lower Services in the Church, let him *wait on his ministring*, and diligently perform what he is set about.

He that teacheth, either as a Tutor or Catechist, to instil into any the Principles of Religion, must faithfully discharge his Duty therein.

He that exhorteth, or is call'd to the Office of a Priest or Pastor, must carefully attend to Exhortation, and feed the Flock of Christ with sound Doctrine, over which he is made an Overseer.

He that giveth, or is qualify'd for a Benefactor, must do it with Simplicity, that is, without any kind of Vanity or Ostentation.

He that ruleth, or is call'd to the Office of a Bishop or Governour in the Church, must *do it with Diligence*; not as being Lords over God's Heritage, but as Examples to the Flock, as those that watch for their Souls.

Lastly, *He that sheweth Mercy, must do it with Chearfulness*, for God loveth a chearful Giver.

Thus as there are divers Offices and Functions among Christians, so are there divers Gifts and Abilities bestow'd upon them for the doing their several Duties in each; all

which are to be diſcharg'd by them with the utmoſt Diligence and Fidelity.

Now to this end the Apoſtle, in the following part of the Epiſtle for this Day, recommends ſeveral Graces and Vertues, that will very much help towards the faithful Diſcharge of theſe Offices: for our Gifts muſt be attended and ſanctified with Grace, before they can anſwer or promote the End for which they were given.

And the prime and principal Grace here recommended for that purpoſe, is Love, both to God, our Neighbour, and our ſelves; for that will make all parts of our Duty to each eaſy and delightſom to us. He that is mov'd in his Duty by the Wheels of Love, will move nimbly and chearfully in it: but then this *Love muſt be without Diſſimulation*; for ſo the Apoſtle's Advice is, Verſe 9. *Let Love be without Diſſimulation:* that is, it muſt be a true and ſincere Affection, not barely in Shew and Pretence, but in Truth and Reality. Our Love to God muſt be rooted in the Heart, and iſſue from thence in Fruits of Righteouſneſs and new Obedience, that *we may be Holy and without Blame before him in Love*, Epheſ. 1. 4. Our Love to one another muſt be unfeigned, not from the Tongue or the Lips outward, like *Judas*, who betray'd his Maſter with a *Kiſs*; or the *Jews*, who complimented him with, *Hail Maſter!* when they were about to crucify him: and much like that, is the ſaying, Your humble Servant, by ſuch, who are ſo far from ſerving, that at the ſame time they are ſtudying to do the greateſt Miſchief: and too many ſuch there are, who outwardly pretend great Friendſhip, and inwardly prove the greateſt Enemies. This is the height of Diſſimulation, and renders ſuch Perſons at laſt odious in the ſight of God and Men. St. *John* therefore wills all good Chriſtians, to *love not in Word and in Tongue, but in Deed and in Truth*, 1 John 3. 18. to cheriſh a true, hearty and unfeigned Affection in our Breaſt to one another, and to make it appear in Acts of real Kindneſs and Good-Will. Which is the ſame Advice that the Apoſtle here gives us, *Let Love be without Diſſimulation.* To which end he adds in the ſame Verſe, *Abhor that which is Evil, cleave to that which is Good*; i. e. keep at as great a diſtance as you can from all ſorts of Evil, which imbitters Mens Minds, and ſours their Spirits againſt each other; but eſpecially flee and abhor Hypocriſy, which is the Bane of all true Love, and engenders nothing but Strife and Hatred. To maintain that ſincere Love that promotes

Promotes all the Duties of your Calling, learn to deteſt all deceitful and impious Practices, which tend to create Breaches and Diſcord; and *cleave to that which is good*: ſtick to Vertue and all honeſt and juſt Courſes, and that will help to promote Peace, and lead to the Practice of all thoſe Duties that belong to the Station wherein God hath ſet you. In order to this, the Apoſtle exhorts in the next Verſe,

To be kindly affection'd one to another in Brotherly Love, in Honour preferring one another, that is, to be full of Affection and Kindneſs to each other; doing all things that may be grateful and beneficial, but nothing that may be hurtful or troubleſom to any other; not ſtraining up matters to the height and rigour of Action, which may be ſometimes a great Injury and Injuſtice, but making all the Abatements which Equity and Juſtice, conſidering all Circumſtances, may reaſonably allow. This is the *Moderation*, which the Apoſtle would have to *be made known unto all Men*; which as it proceeds from Brotherly-Love, ſo is it the beſt Expedient to preſerve and continue it: eſpecially if we add what the Apoſtle here ſubjoins to it, *viz. In Honour preferring one another*. The under-valuing and detracting from any one's juſt Worth, naturally ſtirs up Strife, and provokes to ſome return or reparation; and this is commonly the Fault of conceited Perſons of a mean Riſe, and little Education: none, we ſay, are ſo bold as blind Buzzards; and they who have a got a little ſmattering, think they know all things, when perhaps they know nothing as they ought to know. And this vainly puffs them up, and makes them prefer themſelves before others, that are in truth far above them: whereas the Apoſtle's Advice here is, not to diſparage but to prefer one another, and to eſteem others better than themſelves; and ſo indeed the beſt and wiſeſt Men do, and 'tis only the Bubbles and Bladders, that ſwell and grow big upon nothing.

St. *Paul* here would have Men emulous in honouring one another, and ſtriving who ſhould do moſt Service to each other this way; and would by no means have them detract from the Honour of another, to derive it upon themſelves; for this is not to prefer, but to degrade one another, and to leſſen others to magnify themſelves: which is inconſiſtent with, and repugnant to all the Duties they owe to one another. Moreover, for the better diſcharge of the Offices and Functions, wherein God hath placed us, the Apoſtle directs in the next Verſe,

To be *not ſlothful in Buſineſs, but fervent in Spirit, ſerving the Lord*, Ver. 4. For the better underſtanding whereof, we muſt note, that all Men are or ought to be engag'd in ſome particular Calling, Profeſſion, or Trade, relating to the Affairs of this Life; and likewiſe in the general Calling and Profeſſion of Chriſtians, in relation to the World to come. The Duty of the former is to be not ſlothful, but diligent and induſtrious in the Buſineſs belonging to our particular Calling; the Duty of the latter is, Zeal and Fervency in the Worſhip of God: Both which will conduce much to our Proſperity in this World, and our Happineſs in the next; and to diſcharge our Duty as Men, and as Chriſtians, we are to be careful and faithful in both.

As for our particular Calling as Men, we are to be not ſlothful, but diligent and induſtrious in the Buſineſs of that; for God hath given Gifts and Abilities both of Body and Mind to that purpoſe, of which he expects an Account and Improvement: and they who abandon themſelves to Idleneſs, and a lazy Neglect of theſe Talents, fall into Want and Beggary here, and will be doom'd with the ſlothful and unprofitable Servant, to eternal Darkneſs hereafter.

As for our general Calling as Chriſtians, we are to be zealous and conſtant therein, not ſhrinking from God's Service, nor growing lukewarm or hypocritical in his Worſhip, but keeping in a conſtant Flame and Fervency of Spirit in his Service.

But here I cannot omit another Tranſlation of theſe Words; ſome inſtead of δουλεύοντες κυρίῳ, ſerving the Lord, read δουλεύοντες καιρῷ, ſerving the Times: willing Chriſtians to double their Diligence and Devotion from the Badneſs of the Times, which was then a Seaſon of great Corruption by the Hereticks, and of great Perſecution by the *Jews*; and we are thereby taught to be ſo far Time-ſervers, as to ſerve our ſelves by it, by making a right Uſe of the Seaſons, and preſerving our ſelves from the Evil and Danger of the Times. To which end, the Apoſtle in the

Next Verſe preſcribes three excellent and uſeful Vertues; to wit, *Rejoicing in Hope, Patience in Tribulation, and continuing inſtant in Prayer*, Ver. 12. Which things will guard us againſt the Difficulties of all Times, and keep us blameleſs to the Coming of our Lord.

As for *rejoicing in Hope*, that gives us to underſtand, that well-grounded Hope is a firm Foundation of Joy; for which reaſon 'tis ſtil'd *an Anchor of the Soul, both ſure and ſtedfaſt*;

ſtedfaſt; that keeps it from fluctuating in Uncertainties, and fixes it upon God, the immovable Center of all Felicity. *Abraham believed in Hope even againſt Hope*, looking for a Saviour to ſpring from his Loins, even when he was bid to ſacrifice his Hopes in offering up his Son, from whom he was to come. *Abraham ſaw my Day* (ſaith Chriſt) *and was glad*; he rejoic'd in a remote and obſcure View of that Salvation which we have liv'd to ſee accompliſh'd; and therefore we may rejoice much more in hope of that future Bleſſedneſs which he hath procur'd for, and promis'd to us. And that will teach us

The next Leſſon, *viz.* to be *patient in Tribulation*; for when our Hearts are fix'd in a lively Hope of a never-fading Inheritance, reſerv'd in Heaven for us, we ſhall eaſily bear thoſe light and ſhort Afflictions that lead to and prepare us for it; which made the Apoſtles and Primitive Chriſtians, rather to rejoice than faint under any Tribulations: and ſo ſhall we too, if we look beyond them, to that Crown of Glory, which is ſet at the end of our Race; eſpecially if, in the

Next place, we *continue inſtant in Prayer*; not giving off our Suit upon the firſt Denial, but continuing and increaſing our importunity; which if not preſently, will in the end ſurely prevail: for God never turns away earneſt and importunate Suiters.

Moreover, to render the better account of the Gifts and Talents committed to us, the Apoſtle in the next Verſe recommends two Duties more; namely, *Diſtributing to the Neceſſity of Saints, and being given to Hoſpitality*, Ver. 13. The one reſpects the Poor, the other Strangers.

As for the Poor, the Wiſe Man tells us, that he that giveth to them, lendeth to the Lord, who will repay it with great Advantage: They who by any unavoidable Accident, or by Sickneſs and the Infirmities of Age, are reduc'd to Want and Neceſſity, are, by the Providence of God, caſt upon our Charity; and God hath charg'd the Subſtance given to others, with the Relief of their Neceſſities.

As for Strangers, we are bid *not to be forgetful to entertain them, for ſome have thereby entertained Angels unawares*; Heb. 13. 2. The Angels there refer'd to, were thoſe that were entertain'd by *Abraham* and *Lot*, of whom we read in the eighteenth and nineteenth Chapters of *Geneſis*; who inſtead of being a Burden, brought a Bleſſing to the Houſes where they came: and we by receiving and lodging of Strangers, may find the ſame or like Bleſſings here, or a much greater Bleſſedneſs hereafter.

Furthermore, we are taught in the next Verſe, how to demean our ſelves towards Enemies, in theſe words; *Bleſs them that perſecute you, bleſs and curſe not*, Ver. 13. This Leſſon Chriſt himſelf taught his Diſciples, *Luke* 6.27,28. *I ſay unto you, Love your Enemies, do good to them that hate you; bleſs them that curſe you, and pray for them that deſpitefully uſe and perſecute you.* And his Apoſtles preſs'd the ſame as a peculiar Precept and Duty of Chriſtianity. The Law of *Moſes* allow'd, in many caſes, ſome ſort of Retaliation and Revenge; as an Eye for an Eye, a Tooth for a Tooth, and the like; but Chriſt's Religion allows none: for whereas 'twas ſaid by them of old, Love your Friends, and hate your Enemies; Chriſt oppos'd his ſaying to the contrary, *But I ſay unto you, love your Enemies*; and the Apoſtle here to the ſame purpoſe, *Bleſs and curſe not.* Yea, our Apoſtle would have Chriſtians to be ſo far from curſing any, that he exhorts them, in the next Verſe, to ſympathize and to bear a part in the Joys and Sorrows of one another; ſaying, Verſe 15. *Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep*; that is, be affected with the Good or Evil that befals each other; If God hath bleſt thy Neighbour with any ſignal and remarkable Bleſſing, inſtead of envying or railing at him, go and congratulate the Bleſſing, join with him in bleſſing God for it, and rejoice in the Comfort that may accrue to him by it. So likewiſe on the other hand, if any Croſs, Trouble or Affliction hath befallen him, go and condole with him; lighten the Burden of his Affliction, and bear a part with him: ſo ſhall we double the Joys, and leſſen the Sorrows of one another. And therefore the Apoſtle wills us to *have the ſame Mind one towards another*; that is, to have the like tender Affection or Compaſſion towards others as we bear to our ſelves; and to have the ſame feeling of others Condition, as we ſhould if it were our own.

Finally, To put an end to all Differences and Contentions, which owe their Riſe to Pride and height of Spirit, the Apoſtle cloſes up the Epiſtle with this Caution; *Mind not high things, but condeſcend to Men of low Eſtate:* that is, Let not thy Mind ſwell above the Circumſtances of thy Condition, but keep it humble and low; do not aſpire after Greatneſs, nor court the Grandeur of the World, which is little better than courting Miſery and Trouble; for tho it may ſhew a fair and gaudy out-ſide, there is little within but Care and Trouble. *Seekeſt thou great things*

for

for thy self? (saith the Prophet) *seek them not*; but rather let great things seek thee than thou them, *Jer.* 45. 5. Shew Meekness and Condescension to Men of low Estate, and stoop to the meanest to do them Good; and that is the way to rise in the Opinion of God and Men.

Thus we see the several Capacities and Relations we stand in to each other, and likewise the several Offices and Functions wherein God hath set us; together with the several Gifts and Graces granted for the faithful discharge of them. It remains only, that we observe and practise these Rules, which will bring Comfort to us in this World, and Happiness in the next. Which God grant, *&c.*

DISCOURSE XXVI.

The GOSPEL for the second Sunday after the *Epiphany*.

St. *John* ii. 1——12.

And the third Day there was a Marriage in Cana *of* Galilee, *and the Mother of* Jesus *was there. And both* Jesus *was call'd and his Disciples, to the Marriage. And when they wanted Wine, the Mother of* Jesus *saith unto him, they have no Wine*, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day gives an account of the first Miracle wrought by our Blessed Saviour, after he enter'd upon his Office, together with the Time, Place, Occasion, and other Circumstances of it. Some indeed think, that he did other Miracles privately before, with relation to the Necessities of his Family, and the Affairs of his Trade; but that this here related, was the first publick Miracle that he did.

As for the time of doing it, the Text tells us, 'twas on the *Third Day*, to be reckon'd from his calling his Disciples, and his Discourses with them, of which we read in the close of the foregoing Chapter; tho some would have it reckon'd from his Baptism, which he receiv'd from St. *John*;

others, from his return from the Wilderneſs, and the Combat he had with the Devil there. But

However that be, 'tis ſaid there was at that time a *Marriage*, ſuppos'd to be of ſome of our Saviour's Relations; the Company conſiſting moſtly of his Neighbours and Kinsfolks.

The Place where it was celebrated, was *in* Cana *of* Galilee, a Place memorable for many other Actions of our Saviour; call'd *Cana of Galilee*, to diſtinguiſh it from another Place of the ſame Name, which was in the Tribe of *Aſher*, call'd *Cana the Great*, lying between *Tyre* and *Sydon*, as we read, *Joſhua* 19. 28, 29.

The Perſons invited to this Wedding, were *the Mother of our Lord*; *and Jeſus alſo and his Diſciples, were called to the Marriage*: where they vouchſafed to come, to adorn and beautify that holy State with their Preſence, and diſdain'd not to be Gueſts at the Marriage-Feaſts; at which they demean'd themſelves with a Mirth and Chearfulneſs ſuitable to ſo joyful a Solemnity. The Wiſe Man tells us, that *there is a time for all things, a time to be merry, and a time to be ſad; a time to laugh, and a time to mourn.* And as it would be improper to be merry at a Funeral, ſo would it be no leſs unſeaſonable to be ſad at a Wedding. And therefore our Bleſſed Saviour, who beſt knew the Times and Seaſons for all things, refus'd not the Civil Society, or the innocent Mirth and Chearfulneſs of ſuch Occaſions. Indeed the ſour and moroſe *Phariſees* blamed this freedom of our Saviour, and wonder'd that he who pretended to the Character of the Meſſias and the Son of God, ſhould ſhew himſelf ſo familiar, and converſe ſo freely with Sinners. When he accepted an invitation from St. *Matthew*, and dined with him, they objected to his Diſciples, *Why eateth and drinketh your Maſter with Publicans and Sinners?* tho he did it merely to reform and do them good. When he went to *Zaccheus*'s Houſe, another Publican, though he brought Salvation with him, yet theſe ſullen Hypocrites mutter'd againſt him; ſaying, *This Man receiveth Sinners, and eateth with them*, Luke 15. 2. And when the Son of Man *came eating and drinking* on ſuch Occaſions, they ſaid, *Behold a Man gluttonous and a Wine-bibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners*; Matth. 11. 19. But Chriſt, who was marvellouſly free, obliging, and converſable with Mankind, rather rebuk'd than reply'd to ſuch Cavils; he would not have his Religion diſparag'd by any Opinion of Sourneſs or Melancholy, and therefore gave no Example of any

ſtarcht,

ſtarcht, ſullen, or moroſe Diſtance, but ſhew'd all innocent Compliance, Chearfulneſs and Condeſcenſion; and would have his Diſciples to learn of him to be meek and lowly in Heart, and to do the ſame.

Such doubtleſs was his Carriage at this Marriage-Feaſt; where we read, that they drank up all the Wine, *and when they wanted Wine, the Mother of Jeſus ſaid unto him, they have no Wine.* The mentioning whereof, was not, we may be ſure, to give any encouragement to Exceſs, but to give an Occaſion of ſhewing a Miracle in the preſence of all that were there, in ſupplying the want of it: and perhaps the private Inſtances which ſhe had before ſeen of his Divine Power, mov'd her to mention it in this preſent Neceſſity.

But what was her Son's Anſwer to her in this Caſe? Why, a ſtrange one at the firſt hearing, and ſuch as ſeem'd rather to check, than to encourage the Motion; for *Jeſus ſaid unto her, Woman what have I to do with thee? mine Hour is not yet come.* Where he does not call her by the Name of Mother, but Woman: as in another Caſe, when the Diſciples ſpake of his Mother, he ask'd, *Who is my Mother?* Mat. 12, 48. not that he was either ignorant of, or diſown'd his Mother, for he ſaid elſewhere, *Woman, behold thy Son.* John 9. 26. But his Deſign in theſe and the like words was, to let her know that ſhe, tho his earthly Parent, was not to interpoſe in Matters of his Office, to which he was ſent by his heavenly Father; in which things he ſignifies, that he had nothing to do with her. And to make her deſiſt from any meddling therein, he farther tells her, that *his Hour was not yet come.* Which muſt not be underſtood ſo in general, that the time of his doing any Miracles was not yet come, for that was already commenc'd at his Baptiſm, when the Holy Ghoſt came down upon him to that end; but that the time of doing that Miracle was not yet ſeaſonable: at leaſt, that it was not ſeaſonable to do it in that publick manner, which ſhe would have it, to ſhew forth his Power unto all. So Chriſt expreſſes himſelf in a like caſe, *John* 7. 6. *My time is not yet come*; meaning, that 'twas not yet ſeaſonable or fit to do many things ſo publickly as they expected: intimating withal his purpoſe of doing them more privately at preſent, and more publickly when a fit ſeaſon comes. Accordingly his Mother gueſſing at his meaning of doing the thing, mov'd to him more privately, and in ſuch a manner, as none ſhould know it but the Servants: *She ſaid unto the Servants, whatſoever he ſaith un-*

to

to you, do it. By which she will'd them, silently to observe his Motion, and to be obedient to him without any Noise, in doing whatever he should bid them.

And there were at that time in the House, where they were, *six Water-pots of Stone set there after the manner of the purifying of the* Jews, *containing two or three Firkins a-piece*; that is, there were several Cisterns of a competent Bigness to hold Water for common Uses, and out of which they were wont to draw it, as occasion did require; and particularly for the several Purifications and Washings which were customary among the *Jews*. For St. *Mark* tells us, that *the* Pharisees *and all the* Jews, *except they wash oft, eat not, holding the Tradition of the Elders; and when they come from the Market, except they wash, they eat not: and many other things there be which they have receiv'd to hold, as the washing of Cups and Pots, of brazen Vessels and Tables.* Mark 7. 3, 4. For all which Uses they had Water still ready in those Cisterns.

Now Jesus seeing those Water-pots, commanded them to be filled up to the Brim; which being done, he by the invisible Influence of his Divine Power immediately turn'd the Water into Wine, and *then said unto the Servants, Draw out now, and bear it unto the Governour of the Feast*: that is, one that presided and order'd all things relating to it; to *him they bare it. When the Ruler of the Feast had tasted the Water that was made Wine, and knew not whence it was, but the Servants which drew the Water knew; the Governour of the Feast call'd to the Bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every Man at the beginning doth set forth good Wine, and when Men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good Wine until now.* By which words he recommended the Goodness and Richness of the Wine; for tho he was ignorant whence it came, or how it was made, none but the Servants being privy to that, yet he found something in it that was extraordinary, and far transcending all that they had before: which made him tell the Bridegroom, that he had done contrary to the usual Course of Feasting, which was to bring out the best and richest Wines at first, when the Palats of the Guests were free, and best able to judg of the Richness of them; but after they were well fill'd, and could not so well distinguish the Relish of them, then lower and common Wine would pass: whereas he had reserv'd the best and noblest Wine at last, and nothing that went before was worthy to be nam'd or compar'd with it.

The

The Bridegroom marvel'd at this Discourse of the Governour, being as ignorant of the matter as he, neither of them knowing whence so great a Quantity of good Wine should come; whereupon they call'd in the Servants, and examin'd them concerning it, who related the Fact, and discover'd the whole Matter. *This Beginning of Miracles did Jesus in* Cana *of* Galilee; that is, this was his first publick Miracle after he was baptiz'd of St. *John*, tho he might have done some private ones before in his own Family. His Inauguration, or first Entrance upon his Office, was here accidentally celebrated with a Feast; where, when Wine was wanting, he wrought a Miracle to supply it, to preserve the innocent Mirth and Joy of that Occasion. And the Marriage then solemniz'd signify'd that spiritual Marriage he was shortly to consummate with his Spouse the Church: for which reason he is often stil'd the *Bridegroom*, John 3. 29. *John* began his Office with fasting, like an Anchoret or Hermit; but Christ enter'd upon his with a Feast, that the Children of the Bride-chamber might rejoice with him; *Mat.* 9. 14, 15. And this Miracle was answerable; for thereby he changed *John*'s Water and Penance into Wine and Joy in the Holy Ghost. And by this 'tis said in the close, that *he manifested his Glory, and his Disciples believ'd on him.* Where two blessed Effects are said to follow this Miracle:

The one, Christ's manifesting his Glory unto the People.

The other, the People's manifesting their Faith in him.

1st, Jesus is here said by this beginning of Miracles to manifest his Glory. He who before liv'd somewhat obscurely with his Parents at *Nazareth*, began now to be more publickly known in *Galilee:* where the Dignity of his Person, the Divinity of his Power, and the Glory of his Mission, were made manifest unto many; to his near Relations and Disciples in the first place, and after by them to all Mankind.

The Greatness and Glory of his Power was eminently seen in the superabundant Effects of his Miracles: for as in the Miracles of the Loaves and the Fishes, after the feeding of so vast a Multitude, there was more left, than was at first set before them; so in this Miracle of the Wine, after they had well drunk, and were satisfy'd, there remain'd a greater Plenty both for Quantity and Goodness, than there was when the Feast began: which argu'd the infinite

infinite Power and Goodneſs of him, who thus liberally provided for them.

2dly, Another Effect of this and other Miracles was, that *his Diſciples believ'd on him.* They ſaw and acknowledg'd a Divinity in him, for none could do the Works that he did, except God were with him. Should any pretend to an extraordinary Miſſion from God, as ſome others have done, and yet do nothing, but what ordinary Men may or can do, they may and ought to be taken for Impoſtors; yea, ſhould any come with falſe and lying Wonders, done by ſleight of Hand, or magical Arts, as the falſe Chriſts, and falſe Prophets did, we are warn'd to believe them not, and to go not after them. But true and real Miracles, that exceed all the Powers and Art of Nature, are a Sign and a Seal from Heaven; and he that brings a Commiſſion ſeal'd with ſuch unqueſtionable Miracles, as our Saviour plainly and manifeſtly did, may and ought to be receiv'd as one that comes from God; ſo the Diſciples here did, and ſo have all their Followers in all Times and Ages ever ſince done, by believing on him.

This is briefly what is held forth to us, in the Goſpel for this Day; from whence we may be inſtructed in the following Leſſons.

1ſt, From Chriſt's Preſence and Freedom at the Marriage-Feaſt, we may learn Affability and Friendlineſs of Converſation. 'Tis no part of our Saviour's Religion to be ſour, moroſe, or cynical; for he himſelf was quite otherwiſe, humble, courteous, and condeſcending upon all Occaſions; and both his Doctrine and Example teach us to be free, familiar and friendly towards all Men. *Nabal* for his Churliſhneſs is ſtil'd one of the Sons of *Belial*, and his Carriage as well as Name betray'd his Folly; for ſo we read, Nabal *was his Name, and Folly was with him.* The *Phariſees* were rebuk'd by our Saviour, as well for their ſullen and moroſe Diſtance from others, as for their Hypocriſy; both which commonly go together, and are the Effects of Pride, and a Contempt both of God and Men. We are indeed commanded to avoid the Vices, but not the Perſons of Men; we are forbid to have any Fellowſhip with the unfruitful Works of Darkneſs, but not with the Workers; for that would hinder what follows, the reproving and reforming of them. But Chriſt teaches us here a better Leſſon, to be affable, friendly, and condeſcending to the Meaneſt: there was nothing crabbed or auſtere

austere in him, but he ever shew'd himself of a sweet, benign and conversable Temper. And for any to say to others, *Stand off, come not nigh me, for I am holier than thou*, savours more of the Pride of a *Pharisee*, than the Humility of a good Christian.

2dly, From Christ's checking that unseasonable Motion of his Mother, with saying, *Woman, what have I to do with thee?* we may be farther confirm'd in that Lesson, that no Indulgence or Indearments of Parents or Kindred should obstruct us in our Duty, or keep us from doing the Will of God: *Wist ye not* (saith he in another place) *that I must be about my Father's Business?* And here, *What have I to do with thee?* when she mov'd for a thing in a manner which he thought unfit. He left Father and Mother to do the Business for which he was sent; *In the Volume of the Book* (saith he) *it is written of me, I come to do thy Will, O God.* Accordingly, we read, that it was his Meat and Drink to do the Will of his heavenly Father, and no carnal Respects of earthly Parents could draw him from it: which made him say, *Whosoever shall do the Will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my Brother, and Sister, and Mother*, Mat. 12. 50. meaning, that he valued more the Children of God by Faith and Obedience, than they that were related to him by Nature and Blood; and that he prefer'd the teaching and conversing with such, before paying a Civility to those who in carnal Respects were nearest to him. And so should we too, when they would draw us to offend God, or hurt our Souls, by gratifying, pleasing, or profiting them.

3dly, From Christ's saying, that his *time was not yet come*, we may learn to know and observe the proper Times and Seasons of Actions; not that we are to pry into those Times and Seasons, which God hath kept secret to himself, as the Time of our Death, or the Day of Judgment; for in those and the like things, Christ told his Disciples, saying, 'tis not for you to know the Times and Seasons, which the Father hath reserv'd the Knowledg of to himself: but in things appertaining to us or our Duty, we are to observe and make choice of the fittest Times and Seasons of doing of them, as keeping to the Hours of Prayer, the Seasons of the Sacraments, and other proper Opportunities of dispatching any spiritual or temporal Matters. *Solomon* hath told us, that *every thing is beautiful in its season*, Eccles. 3. 11. A thing may be done well at one time, that may not

at

at another: As *there is a ſeaſon to every thing, and a time to every Purpoſe under Heaven*, Eccleſ. 3. 1. ſo is it no ſmall piece of Wiſdom to know and nick thoſe Seaſons. *Diſtingue Tempora*, was a good piece of Advice, and may ſerve not only to ſolve many Difficulties, but wiſely to perform many Duties; which we are therefore carefully to watch and improve.

4thly, From Chriſt's manifeſting his Glory by his Miracles, we may learn ſtill to publiſh and ſet forth the ſame; not that we can add any thing to, or take from his eſſential Glory, that is not in the power of any Creature: but all that the Scripture intends by the Expreſſions of *glorifying God, or doing things to his Glory*, is only the ſetting forth the Greatneſs of his Power, and the Excellence of that Glory, which is infinite, and always the ſame. And that is beſt done, when we teſtify in our own Minds, and labour to beget in others a due Reverence and Admiration of the Divine Majeſty, and his adorable Perfections; when the Senſe of his infinite Power makes us to rely upon him, of his Juſtice to fear him, of his Mercy to love him: in a word, when we inwardly cheriſh thoſe Paſſions and Affections, which are ſuitable to his Attributes, and outwardly perform thoſe good Works by which he delights to be ſerv'd; then do we in the beſt mannner we can manifeſt his Glory, and advance our own.

Laſtly, From the Effect that this Miracle had upon the Diſciples to make them believe on him, we may learn and labour for a firm and unſhaken Faith in him; taking him for the true promis'd Meſſiah, and believing the Doctrine reveal'd by him. Miracles are the ſtrongeſt Seal that can be ſet to any Doctrine, for they evidently ſhew it to come from God, who alone does ſuch Wonders: and therefore we may and ought ſtedfaſtly to adhere to the Truths deliver'd by him, and lay the whole ſtreſs of our Hopes of Salvation upon him.

DISCOURSE XXVII.

The EPISTLE for the Third Sunday after *Epiphany.*

Rom. xii. 16, to the end.

Be not wiſe in your own Conceits. Recompenſe to no Man Evil for Evil. Provide things honeſt in the ſight of all Men. If it be poſſible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all Men, &c.

THE Collect for this Day puts us in mind of the ſad and calamitous Eſtate of this Life, and therefore prays Almighty God mercifully to look upon our Infirmities, and in all our Dangers and Neceſſities to ſtretch forth his right Hand to help and defend us.

The Epiſtle for the Day gives us many uſeful Rules to be obſerv'd by us in order to that end. Indeed this whole Chapter, of which the Epiſtle is a part, contains many excellent Precepts both divine and moral, to direct us in the whole Courſe of our Life; and therefore the Church hath wiſely ſelected them, to be read in three ſeveral Portions, in the three following Sundays after the Epiphany; that having the Light, we may be taught how to walk in it. Of theſe Portions, the Epiſtle for this Day is the laſt, and is now to be explain'd.

It begins with a Caution againſt Pride and Revenge; *Be not wiſe in your own Conceits, and recompenſe to no Man Evil for Evil:* And continues with an Exhortation to ſeveral Graces and Vertues that may help to ſuppreſs and ſubdue both. I begin then with the

Firſt Thing here caution'd againſt, and that is Pride, in theſe words; *Be not wiſe in your own Conceits.* Now this is what the Apoſtle before condemn'd, ver. 3. *Let no Man think more highly of himſelf than he ought to think.* So that Self-

Self-Conceit is a too high and overweening Opinion of a Man's own Wisdom; and that discovers it self several ways. As,

1st, By being too confident of himself, and leaning too much to his own Understanding; setting up his Judgment above theirs who are far superiour to him both in Parts and Place: this makes some to be wiser than their Teachers, and to controul their Governours, and stick pertinaciously to their own Ways and Opinions.

Again, Self-conceit discovers it self by not hearkning to the Advice and Counsel of their Betters, but taking it amiss that any should teach or advise them, who think they know enough already.

Moreover, Self-conceit is seen in Mens imposing their own private Fancies, Humours, and Customs upon others, as if none but they had Wit or Judgment enough to direct them in such matters. The proud Man would teach all, but learn of none, and suffer none to know or understand any thing, at least so fully as himself.

Again, Self-conceit discovers it self in a busy pragmatical meddling in other Mens matters, interpoling in their Affairs without any Authority, and giving their Judgment before they are ask'd: If any thing be well done, 'twas done by their direction; if it miscarry, 'twas because it was done without their Advice, or the Fool would not be rul'd. The proud Person puts his Sickle into every Man's Corn, hath an Oar in every Man's Boat; monopolizing all Wisdom to himself, and scarce allowing enough of it to any to manage their own Affairs; which is an Argument of great Pride and Folly, for they who are thus full of themselves, are commonly found the emptiest Persons, and big with nothing but Self-conceit.

Once more, Self-conceit discovers it self by judging and censuring of others, and charging them with Ignorance and Folly, for not doing as they would have them. This is too common a Fault with many, who sit in Judgment upon others, arraigning their Actions, and passing Sentence upon them without any Authority; yea, against the Commands of God, who forbids them to judg their Brethren, asking who made them Judges, and threatning them with the same or greater Judgment than they pass upon others.

These, among many others, are the Signs and Properties of Self-Conceit, but the bad Effects of it are too many and great to be easily reckon'd; for it hath a very bad influence

both

both in Church and State, and creates great Diſturbances in Neighbourhoods and private Converſation.

In the Church, Pride and Self-conceit hath done and ſtill does unſpeakable miſchief. This hath made many Atheiſts, Hereticks, and Schiſmaticks, to the great decay of Religion, and diſturbance of the Church: for ſome Mens ſetting up their own Reaſon above Divine Revelation, and others preferring their private Wiſdom before that of their Teachers, have run into great Errors and Diviſions. Their being wiſe in their own Conceits, hath made them deſpiſe all publick Orders and Conſtitutions, and to diſobey thoſe whom God hath appointed both to rule and to teach them; which naturally leads to all manner of Confuſion and Diſorder, as our own ſad Experience doth too plainly manifeſt. Again,

2*dly*, Self-conceit does no leſs harm in the State than in the Church; for when Men come once to think themſelves wiſer than their Governours, they ſoon ſhake off the Yoke, and do only what is right in their own eyes. Hence they come to *deſpiſe Dominions, and to ſpeak evil of Dignities*, and grow refractory againſt Laws and Government. *A proud Heart* (ſaith *Solomon*) *ſtirreth up Strife*, Prov. 28. 25. They that think too highly of themſelves, will be diſputing thoſe Orders to which they ought to ſubmit, and ſtudy to evade Laws, which they are oblig'd to obey. And of this too, our unhappy Age can afford us too many Inſtances. Again,

3*dly*, This Self-conceit occaſions great Diſturbances in Neighbourhoods and private Converſation; for this makes Men buſy and pragmatical in other Mens matters, and inſtead of ſtudying to be quiet, by doing their own buſineſs, puts Men upon meddling in others Affairs, which perhaps they underſtand not, and belong not to them: and thus, by taking too much upon them, they grow troubleſom and uneaſy to all that are about them. This likewiſe is too well known to need any proof.

And as the Sin of Self-conceit is great, ſo is the Danger of it no leſs; for it puts a bar to all Proficiency in Grace and Knowledg: for who will labour to know more, that thinks himſelf wiſe enough already? *Seeſt thou a Man wiſe in his own Conceit?* (ſaith *Solomon*) *there is more hope of a Fool than of him*, Prov. 26. 12. For ſuch a one is deaf to Inſtruction, and is ſo far from being ſenſible of his Defects,

that he takes his Errors for Truth, and his Dreams for Revelations.

But the great danger of this Evil is, that it ſets God Almighty againſt them; for *God reſiſteth the Proud, and beholdeth them afar off.* He with-holds his Grace from them, and leaves them to the Vanity of their own Mind; which leads them into all Sin and Miſery. Now,

1ſt, To cure this Evil, we are often to conſider the Shortneſs and Scantineſs of our own Knowledg: *He that thinketh he knoweth any thing* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.* The firſt ſtep to all ſound Knowledg, is to be ſenſible of our Ignorance, how few things we know, in compariſon of thoſe we know not; this will help to cure the Swelling of the Mind, and ſhrink it into mean Thoughts of it ſelf, the beſt Preparative to true Wiſdom.

2dly, To cure this Self-conceit, let us look more and oftner upon thoſe that excel, than thoſe that come ſhort of us; and that will help us to think ſoberly and modeſtly of our ſelves, and in honour to prefer one another.

3dly, To cure this Vanity, conſider the Defects and Imperfections even of the wiſeſt Men: and then think with thy ſelf, if they know but in part, how much leſs is it that falls within the Sphere of thy Knowledg; and if the Light within them be Darkneſs, how great is thy Darkneſs? And,

Laſtly, To remove this Evil, often pray for the Grace of Humility; for we are naturally proud and vain, and nothing but the Grace of God can keep down the Riſings of a proud Heart: and therefore to be rid of all Pride and Self-conceit, let us beg and labour to be cloth'd with Humility. This is the firſt Caution here given, *Be not wiſe in your own Conceit.*

The *Second* is againſt *Revenge*, in the next words; *Recompenſe to no Man Evil for Evil.* 'Tis the miſtake of too many, to think that they may ſafely return all the bad Uſage they have receiv'd from others, and to do to them as they have been done to by them: ſo that if any have prov'd falſe, deceitful, abuſive, or any way injurious to them, they may well enough return all this upon them, and do the ſame things to them again. Theſe are the Thoughts and Practices of proud, envious, and malicious Perſons; ſome whereof are gone ſo far, as to think, tho others have done them no evil, yet if they do not what they

they would have them, they may ſtudy to do them all the miſchief they can. Theſe are no Principles of Religion, but the Suggeſtions of Satan, and the corrupt Inſinuations of a deceitful Heart; for Religion conſiſts intirely in doing good, and forbids all doing or returning of any evil. The golden Rule is, to do not as we are, but as we would be done by; ſo that what we would not have done to us, that we muſt take care not to do to others, tho perhaps they may have already done it unto us: for what we took to be evil when done to our ſelves, cannot become good by our doing it back again to others.

Indeed, *Moſes*'s Law allow'd of ſome kind of Retaliation in Caſes of Wrong; but Chriſt's Law hath cut it quite off, and requires, in caſes of Injuries, to be more ready to receive another, than to return the firſt: for we find him oppoſing his Sayings to what was ſaid by them of old in theſe matters, to love Enemies, to do good to them that do evil to us, and rather to turn the other Cheek to the Smiter, than to return the firſt Blow: and his Example was according to his Precept; for *when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he ſuffered, he threatned not, but committed himſelf to him who judges righteouſly*: 1 Pet. 2. 23. When his Enemies buffeted him, ſpit in his face, and ſmote him with the hand, he return'd nothing but Prayers for them; ſaying, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.* From which Precepts and Practice of our Saviour, the Apoſtle here directs to *recompenſe to no Man Evil for Evil*; of which he ſpeaks more by and by. In the mean time, to learn the foregoing Leſſons, he adviſes in the

Next words, to *provide things honeſt in the ſight of all Men*, as the beſt means to ſuppreſs all Vanity and Elation of Mind, and to incline Men to do good rather than evil to one another: for he that takes care to do nothing but what is honeſt and honourable in the ſight of all Men, will not diſgrace his Chriſtian Profeſſion by acting any thing contrary to it. Now by *providing things honeſt in the ſight of all Men*, may be meant, either the doing things only that are fit and fair, and agreeable to the Doctrine of the Goſpel which they had receiv'd; in which ſenſe, the Advice is the ſame with that given to the *Philippians*, Chap. 4. 8. *Finally, Brethren, whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever*

things are lovely and of good report; if there be any Vertue, and if there be any Praise, think on these things: that is, he would have them keep to things that are truly vertuous and commendable, that they might adorn their Profession, and render it lovely and amiable in the eyes of all Men.

Or else to *provide things honest in the sight of all Men*, is to do things decent in point of Diet and Apparel, as becomes our State and Condition, and to live suitable to the Place and Station wherein God hath set us, in all Sobriety, Meekness, and Contentedness. To which end, we are directed in the

Next Verse, *if it be possible, as much as lieth in us, to live peaceably with all Men*; this being a good means to preserve the Ease, Quiet, and Comfort of Mankind: for he that studieth Peace and Quiet, will be easy to himself and others; but he that delights in Brawls and Contentions, will be very troublesom to both. And therefore the Apostle wills us, *if it be possible, as much as lieth in us*, that is, as far as we lawfully may (for *id tantum possumus, quod jure possumus*) *to live peaceably with all Men*. Now to live peaceably with all Men, is to suffer them to live as easily and quietly as we may, and to promote as far as we can the Peace and Prosperity of all Men; but still the Terms and Conditions of this Peace, is the keeping our Peace with God. We may not violate our Duty to him, to make or keep peace with any; for our Obligations to our Maker are superiour to any Engagements to our Neighbour; and where these happen to clash or interfere, 'tis obvious which is to take place; for as we are to obey God rather than Man, so are we to prefer our Peace with him before a Peace with all the World beside. Neither may we violate the Peace of our own Conscience, to gratify or please others; for that is too near and dear a Concern, to be yielded up to the Will of any. But in all other things, wherein we offend not God, nor wound our own Conscience, we are to comply with others for the sake of Peace. In short, the Laws of God are the Rule and Standard of our Peace with him; the Laws of Men, that are not contrary to the Will of God, are the Measure and Conditions of our Peace with Mankind; and both are the Terms of Peace with our own Conscience: the observing of these Laws is the keeping of the Peace with each, but the breaking of them is the breach of the Peace with all.

Thus

Thus we ſee the way to live peaceably with all Men; which is, to live in obedience to the Commands of God and our Superiours, and to obſerve the Laws that regulate the Intercourſe and Societies of Mankind. And this ſhews how far it *lies in us* to live peaceably; and that is, not by having our own Will or Way in every thing, for that is the cauſe of moſt Contentions, and no Peace can be had that way: but 'tis by doing our Duty where we are bound by the Laws of God and Man, and where we are free to condeſcend and comply for the good of one another; this is as much as is poſſible, and as far as lies in us to promote Peace. 'Tis true, this may not always procure it; however, in doing this we have done our Duty, and gone ſo far as we may, and ſo may reſt ſatisfy'd, leaving the Iſſue and Event of things to him that judges righteouſly.

'Tis Perſons that are addicted too much to their own Intereſt, Humours, and Paſſions, that are eagerly bent upon their own Deſigns, and reſolve to purſue them right or wrong; theſe are the Enemies of Peace, and Diſturbers of the Quiet of the World. And therefore we muſt mortify thoſe unruly Paſſions and Affections that are apt to breed and foment Quarrels, and labour for thoſe pious and peaceable Diſpoſitions that tend to reconcile us to God, our ſelves, and one another; and that will help us to live peaceably with all Men. The better to promote which,

The Apoſtle in the next Verſe renews his former Caution againſt Revenge; uſhering it in with a kind and loving Compellation, ſaying, *Dearly Beloved, avenge not your ſelves:* that is, if you will live peaceably, you muſt lay aſide all thoughts of returning any Evil, and not harbour the leaſt Deſire of avenging your ſelves; for that keeps the Wound ſtill raw, and inſtead of cloſing up, makes it feſter and rankle, and fills the Mind with Malignity and Thoughts of Miſchief. And therefore he gives a ſtrict Caution, *See that no Man render Evil for Evil, but ever follow that which is good, among your ſelves and to all Men*; 1 Theſſ. 5. 15. And St. *Peter* to the ſame purpoſe; *Not rendring Evil for Evil, or Railing for Railing, but contrariwiſe Bleſſing; knowing that ye are hereunto call'd, that ye may inherit a Bleſſing.* 1 Pet. 3. 9. Where he would not have Chriſtians in the leaſt degree to act or meditate Revenge againſt any that had been moſt injurious, but rather to bleſs and curſe not; which is the beſt way to receive a Bleſſing from God.

Now to cure this revengeful Humour, our Apoſtle adds, in the next words, *But rather give place unto Wrath.* Where by giving place unto Wrath, we muſt not underſtand the giving way to our Paſſions, or indulging our Anger; for that will make them headſtrong, and hurry Men into all the ways of Revenge: to give place to Wrath in that ſenſe, is elſewhere ſaid to be *giving place to the Devil*, Eph. 4. 27. But to give place unto Wrath here, is to give time to conſider; not to be raſhly or haſtily mov'd, but to allow ſome ſpace for Deliberation, to cool the Fervours of the Mind, and allay the Heats of Rage and Revenge. To which end, the Apoſtle ſubjoins a farther Motive, taken from God Almighty's ſole Right to Vengeance; ſaying, *It is written, Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, ſaith the Lord.* This is written in *Deut.* 32. 22, *&c.* where God himſelf declares, that it belongs to him to puniſh Offenders, and that he will do it in his due time. Now this he doth ſometimes immediately by himſelf, by pouring down his Judgments upon them; in which caſes, the Author to the *Hebrews* tells us, *'tis a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*, Heb. 10. 31. But more frequently by his Officers, Judges, and Magiſtrates, whom he hath appointed to be the Inſtruments and Executioners of his Vengeance: for which reaſon the Apoſtle thus beſpeaks Offenders; *If thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the Sword in vain, but is the Miniſter of God, and a Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doth evil:* Rom. 13. 4. So that to go about to avenge our ſelves, is to take God's work out of his hands, and to invade his Prerogative; which is a high piece of Preſumption, that will draw greater Evils upon our ſelves, than thoſe which we ſeek to redreſs in others. From all which the Apoſtle infers, that 'twill be much better to leave Sinners to God's Puniſhment, than to go about to do it our ſelves; and for us, our wiſeſt way at preſent is to conquer their Enmity by Kindneſs and good Offices. Therefore ſaith he, *If thine Enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirſt, give him drink; for in ſo doing thou ſhalt heap Coals of fire upon his head.* If he who wiſhes thee ill, labour under any Want, do him all the good thou canſt; if he want Meat, give him to eat; if he want Liquor, give him to drink; for that will melt the hardeſt Heart, and ſoften the moſt obdurate Spirit. Do then as Artificers do in melting Metals; if putting fire under them will not do, they pour live Coals upon the top, and by

that

that means melt the hardeſt Metals: if leſſer Favours do not mollify, heap warmer Coals upon his head, and they may purge off the Enmity, and melt him into Love and Compliance.

This is the way here preſcrib'd to us under the Injuries and Unkindneſſes of Enemies; which will prove a more effectual means of removing them, than the rougher methods of Revenge and Retaliation. After which, the Apoſtle cloſes the Chapter and the Epiſtle for this Day with that excellent piece of Advice, *Be not overcome of Evil, but overcome Evil with Good.*

To be overcome of Evil, is to be ſo far exaſperated by it, as to be mov'd to return and avenge it; which ſhews it to have got the maſtery of us, and put us beſide our Patience. By this a Man is brought in bondage to his Paſſions, and becomes a Slave and Vaſſal to his vile Affections; for *of whom a Man is overcome, of him he is brought in bondage.* And to be thus inſlav'd by another's Wickedneſs, is the baſeſt of all Servitudes; which we ſhould therefore ſcorn to be reduc'd to.

To overcome Evil with Good, is to conquer others Injuries by Acts of Mercy and Kindneſs, and to return nothing but Good for the Evil that is done us; which ſhews that we keep the maſtery of our ſelves, and cannot be ſhock'd by the Aſſaults of any Adverſaries. Thus to overcome Evil with Good, is the nobleſt of all Victories: *'Tis the Glory of a Man* (ſaith *Solomon*) *to paſs by an Offence*; and *he that governs his Paſſions, is greater than he that ruleth a City.* For theſe things, we cannot propound to our ſelves a higher and better Pattern than that of our Saviour, who overcame the greateſt Evils with the greateſt Good; and in the end, for enduring the Croſs, was rewarded with a Crown: and we too by patient Continuance in well-doing, ſhall receive Eternal Life; which God grant, *&c.*

DISCOURSE XXVIII.

The GOSPEL for the Third Sunday after the *Epiphany*.

St. Matthew viii. 1——13.

When he was come down from the Mountain, great Multitudes followed him: And behold there came a Leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean, &c.

IN this Gospel for the Day we have an Account of two Miracles done by our Blessed Saviour: the one upon a Leper, whom he heal'd by a Touch of his Hand; the other upon a Centurion's Servant, whom he cured by a Word of his Mouth. The Circumstances of both being here related, it will be requisite a little to unfold and explain them.

The first Verse of the Gospel acquaints us with the Circumstances of Time and Place whence he came, and when and where he did them, together with the Company that attended him: *When he was come down from the Mountain, great Multitudes followed him.* The Mountain here mention'd, from whence he came down, was the Mount of *Olives*, where our Saviour preach'd his famous Sermon, known by the Name of his Sermon on the Mount; an Account of which, St. *Matthew* gives us in the three foregoing Chapters. The Law was deliver'd by *Moses* on a Mountain, *viz.* Mount *Sinai*; as the Gospel was deliver'd by Christ on the Mount of *Olives*: and both for the same reason, that they might be the better seen and heard by the People. Here it was that Christ pronounc'd the eight Beatitudes, and publish'd the glad Tidings of the Gospel; call'd therefore, as Mount *Gerizim* sometimes was, *Mons Beatitudinum*, the Mount of Blessings. Here likewise he taught his Disciples many sublime and heavenly Truths, Truths that far excell'd not only the Precepts of the wisest Moralists,

Moralists, but the obscure Revelations of *Moses*'s Law; all which he deliver'd with a Majesty suitable to the Dignity of his Person, and the Divinity of his Doctrine; for he spake as one having Authority, and not as the *Scribes*.

When he had finish'd this Divine Discourse, he *came down from the Mountain*, attended with a great Resort of People; for *great Multitudes followed him*, partly to hear more of his Doctrine, and partly to see his Miracles, and the wonderful Works that were done by him, and especially the Cures wrought by him.

But Christ was no sooner descended from this Mountain, but presently an Object of Mercy and Pity presented it self to him, to exercise his Power and Goodness upon him: for *behold, there came a Leper and worshipped him*; that is, fell down at his feet, which is in Scripture often exprest by worshipping.

But how did he address to him? Why, not with long pitiful Moans and Complaints of his Sickness, but saying only those few and hearty words; *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* In which words are expres'd, first, a Sense of Christ's Power to help him, *If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*; and, secondly, a Sense of his own Weakness, that he could not do it himself: two excellent Qualifications of a Petitioner, which commonly incline him that is address'd to, to hear and answer the Petition. Accordingly therefore, Jesus seeing his Faith and humble Dependence upon him, presently *put forth his Hand and touched him*; uttering withal these words, *I will, be thou clean.* And what follow'd upon his saying those words? Why, he was *immediately made whole, and his Leprosy was cleansed.* The Suddenness as well as the Easiness of the Cure transported him with Joy; but whilst he was breaking out into Praises and Thanksgiving, our Saviour gave him a double Charge;

1*st*, That he should not publish, or make any words of it; ver. 3. *Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no Man, but go thy way.*

2*dly*, That he should go and shew himself unto the Priest, and offer the Gift that *Moses* commanded for a Testimony unto them. Both these parts of the Charge will require a little Explication.

As for the first part of the Charge, of not divulging or telling any of the Cure wrought upon him, we find him giving the same upon many other like Occasions: as *Mat.* 9. 30.

when

when he had given Sight to two blind Men, *he ſtraitly charg'd them, ſaying, See that no Man know it.* So likewiſe when he reſtor'd a Man's wither'd Hand, and heal'd others of many Diſtempers, he *charg'd them, that they ſhould not make him known*; Mat. 12. 16.

But why did our Saviour ſo often command the concealing of his Miracles, which were ſo plain an Evidence of his Meſſiahſhip? Why, of this, different Reaſons and Conjectures have been given. Some have thought that our Saviour did this, that Men might look more to his Doctrine than his Miracles; the one being more edifying, as tending more to the Welfare and Happineſs of their Souls than the other, which related chiefly to the Health and Welfare of their Bodies. Others again tell us, that Miracles are more apt to raiſe Wonder and Admiration, than to beget any real Fruits of Vertue and Holineſs: and therefore Chriſt would not have them too publickly ſpoken of, leſt they ſhould put Men upon deſiring only temporal Favours of him; which would rather hinder than further his chief End in doing them, which was the eternal Salvation of their Souls. But that theſe were not the true Reaſons hereof, is evident, becauſe we find Chriſt often appealing to his Miracles for the Truth of his Doctrine, and willing Men to believe him, if not for his Words, yet for his Work's ſake; which he would not do, if they were apt to produce no better Effects.

The true reaſon then of Chriſt's charging ſome Perſons not to divulge the Miracles he had wrought upon them, was from his Knowledg of the Perverſeneſs and Blaſphemy of the *Phariſees* and others, who inſtead of being convinc'd by his Miracles, would take occaſion thence to blaſpheme, by aſcribing them not to the Spirit of God, but to the Power of the Devil. Beſides, he knew it might expoſe him to the Envy and Malice of the *Jews*, and ſo put him in danger of being cut off (without withdrawing or defending himſelf) before he had done the Work for which he was ſent; which made him ſometimes forbid the publiſhing of his Works, leſt they come to the Ears of thoſe that would make ſo ill uſe of them, which would be no better than caſting Pearls before Swine.

But yet, at other times, Chriſt publickly own'd, and did his Miracles in the ſight of many, when it might ſerve to better Purpoſes, and tend to the Benefit and Conviction of the World.

2*ly*, The

2*ly*, The other Charge that Christ gave to this Leper, was, to go *and shew himself to the Priest, and offer the Gift that* Moses *commanded as a Testimony unto them.* And this he did, to shew his exact Conformity to the *Jewish* Church, of which he was a Member.

His shewing himself unto the Priest, was a thing commanded in the Levitical Law, as we read, Lev. 14. 2. *This is the Law of the Leper, in the day of his Cleansing he shall be brought unto the Priest*; who, after the performing of some Rites for him, was to pronounce him clean, and to receive him into the Sanctuary and the Fellowship of the People. In obedience to which Law, Christ bids this Leper, whom he had heal'd, to go and shew himself unto the Priest. Moreover, there was an Offering to be made unto the Priest, upon the Day of his cleansing, of which our Saviour also minds him, to give his Encouragement of paying the Rights and Respects due to the Priestly Office: *Go* (saith he) *and offer the Gift that* Moses *commanded*; *and this he did for a Testimony unto them*, that he oppos'd not the Law given by *Moses*, and that he was the true Messiah of whom *Moses* spake.

This is briefly the first Miracle here related, *viz.* that of the Leper, in all its Circumstances.

The Second is, that of the Centurion's Servant, in the following part of the Epistle; it begins *ver.* 5. *And when Jesus was enter'd into* Capernaum, *there came unto him a Centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my Servant lieth at home sick of the Palsy, grievously tormented.* Here we have the Time and Place of this Miracle also recorded, which was when he was enter'd into *Capernaum*, the chief City of *Galilee*; and that was a little after his coming down from the Mount.

The Person here applying to him was a Centurion, that is, a military Officer or Captain, having a hundred Soldiers under his Command. This Captain or Officer came to our Saviour, not for himself, but in the behalf of his Servant, who lay sick at his House, grievously tormented with a Palsy. Now this Centurion, tho a *Roman* and a Heathen, is suppos'd to incline much to be a Christian, being mightily affected both with the Doctrine and Miracles of our Saviour; which made him come to him, and earnestly beseech him to use his Power in healing his sick Servant, whom he dearly lov'd.

Jesus

Jesus willing to encourage his Faith, which he perceiv'd to increase and grow in him, saith unto him, *I will come and heal him.* The Centurion, either thinking his House not fit to receive so great a Guest, or believing that he could effect the Cure with a word's speaking, without troubling himself any farther, answer'd and said unto him, *Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my Roof, but speak the Word only, and my Servant shall be healed.* To shew how firmly he believ'd this, he amplifies it by the Authority he had over his Soldiers, which was far less than he had over all manner of Diseases; and yet, saith he, *If I say to this Man, Go, he presently goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my Servant, Do this, and he doth it:* how much more then can He whose Power is infinite, and can do whatever pleaseth him, easily rebuke and remove any Distemper? By which he shew'd his full Assurance, that one Word of his would easily cure him, without any more ado.

Christ seeing the Strength of his Faith, and hearing the Soundness of his Reasoning, *marvelled*; and shewing some sign of Admiration, *said to them that followed him, Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great Faith, no not in Israel:* meaning, that this *Roman* Officer, who had heard little of a Messiah, and read less of the Prophecies concerning him, discover'd a better Knowledg and Belief in him, than many of the *Jews*, who had the Law and the Prophets, and heard both daily expounded to them.

Now this Centurion being a *Gentile* or Heathen, and yet shewing a greater Faith in Christ, than most of the *Jews* to whom he was sent, gave occasion to our Saviour in the next Verses to speak of the calling of the *Gentiles*, and the Rejection of the *Jews*.

The first is in these words, *And I say unto you, that many shall come from the East and West, and shall sit down with* Abraham, *and* Isaac, *and* Jacob *in the Kingdom of Heaven*, ver. 11. This is spoken of the *Gentiles*, and such as this Centurion was; who *tho Aliens to the Commonwealth of* Israel, *and Strangers to the Covenant of Promise*, and excluded by a *Partition-wall* from all the Privileges of the Temple, are yet to be receiv'd into Favour, adopted into Christ's Family, and to be made the Children of God. This was foretold by the Prophets of old, that the *Gentiles* should come in, and be made one Flock under the great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls; and the time of the fulfilling that

Prophecy was at hand, when great Multitudes from all parts of the World would come in and believe in Christ, and enjoy the Fruits of eternal Life, with *Abraham* the Father of the Faithful, and the other Patriarchs of the *Jewish* Nation. *Many* (saith he) *shall come from the East*: this was verify'd and began in those eastern *Magi* or Wisemen that came from the oriental Parts to worship and do homage to the Messiah, and to present him with the richest Offerings of their Country. Those *from the West*, were those great Multitudes that came from the western Parts to visit and adore this great Prophet that was sent from God; of whom it is said, that many believ'd in him: and these are here promis'd to *sit down with* Abraham, *and* Isaac, *and* Jacob *in the Kingdom of Heaven*; meaning, that they should be counted for the spiritual Seed of those pious Patriarchs, and be Heirs of the Promises made to them and their Posterity. This is what our Saviour here took occasion from the Centurion's Faith to speak concerning the Calling in of the *Gentiles*, of which see more in the Epistle for the *Epiphany*.

The second thing he here takes notice of upon this Occasion, is the Rejection of the *Jews* for their Unbelief, in the next words; *But the Children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into outer Darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth.* By the Children of the Kingdom here, are meant the People of the *Jews*, who were appointed the true Heirs of the Kingdom; for to them appertain'd the Adoption, the giving of the Law, and Promises: From these, *as concerning the Flesh*, *Christ came*; and to these he was first sent, who for their straying from him are stil'd *the lost Sheep of the House of* Israel. *He came unto his own*, (saith St. *John*) that is, to his own People the *Jews*, call'd his own peculiar People for his Descent from them, and the many great Privileges confer'd on them; *but they receiv'd him not*, saith he: they would not believe his Doctrine, not agreeing with the vain Hopes of those temporal Honours and Advantages which they fondly expected from him; nor could all his Miracles convince them, or conquer the Prejudices they entertain'd against him. For this their obstinate Infidelity, they were utterly rejected by him; and instead of the Light of eternal Life, which they might have had by him, were cast into outer Darkness, there to lament their Folly with endless wailing, and gnashing of Teeth. *But to as many as receiv'd him, whether*

ther Jew *or* Gentile, *to them gave he Power to become the Sons of God, even to as many as believ'd in his Name.* Of which number was this Centurion in the Text, who believ'd his Word, and was fully perſuaded of his Power, and for that reaſon receiv'd that gracious Anſwer to his Requeſt, in the laſt words; *And Jeſus ſaid unto the Centurion, Go thy way, and as thou haſt believ'd ſo be it done unto thee.* Which words had that good effect, that it follows, *And his Servant was heal'd in the ſelf-ſame hour.* Which is the ſecond Miracle here related.

This is briefly the Sum of the Goſpel for this Day; from which we may learn theſe two or three uſeful Leſſons.

And *1ſt*, From Chriſt's healing the Leper and the Centurion's Servant, we may learn the great Goodneſs of our Saviour, in not with-holding his miraculous and healing Power from the meaneſt Objects. The Leper here is ſuppos'd to be a poor Perſon, having none to preſent or accompany him; but was drawn only by the Strength of his Faith, and the Exigence of his Diſtemper. And the Centurion's Servant, we may well think, was not much better, tho he had a good Maſter to intercede for him. However, Chriſt readily exerted his Power, and extended his Goodneſs in healing both: he rejects none for their Poverty, for he choſe himſelf to be in that condition; and looks upon it not as a Hindrance, but a Qualification for his Mercy. He hath pronounc'd the Poor bleſſed, and declar'd that theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven; and having provided ſo well for them hereafter, to be ſure he will not deſpiſe or neglect them here.

2dly, From Chriſt's backing his Doctrine with Miracles, we may farther learn his great Care and Kindneſs for our Souls, that he leaves no means unattempted for our Conviction and Salvation. Indeed the Excellence and Uſefulneſs of his Doctrine, if well conſider'd, are ſufficient to beget and increaſe our Faith in him; and his Word alone, if duly attended to and obſerv'd, is enough to bring us to eternal Life. But leſt any ſhould think that a Deceiver might publiſh as plauſible a Doctrine, and that none is to be believ'd upon his bare Word, he thought fit to add thoſe mighty and miraculous Works, that were abundantly ſufficient to confirm the Truth of all that he ſaid. *If I bear Witneſs of my ſelf* (ſaith he) *my Witneſs is not true*; that is, may not be ſo well rely'd upon: *John* 5. 31. *But I*

have

have a greater Witness than that (saith he) *for the Works which the Father hath given me to do, the same Works bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me*; ver. 36. & *John* 10.25. And as this is a clear Evidence of his Truth, so is it of his Goodness too, in condescending so far for our Satisfaction; which is a fit Subject for our Meditation this Day.

3*dly*, We may learn hence the inexcusable Folly and Danger of Unbelief in Christ, after so full an Attestation of his Person and Doctrine. This was the deplorable Fault and Folly of the *Jews*, in not believing in Jesus, after all that he said or did among them; which brought great Miseries and Troubles upon them, and at last occasion'd their utter Rejection. Our Saviour makes this the inexcusable Aggravation of their Infidelity, that they would not be convinc'd by all his wonderful Works: *If I had not done among them* (saith he) *the Works that none other Man did, they had not had Sin; but now they have both seen and hated me and my Father*: John 15. 24. *Now* (saith he elsewhere) *they have no Cloak for Sin*, nor any Excuse for all the Miseries that are come upon them. This made him upbraid the Cities, where his mighty Works were done, saying, *Wo unto thee* Corazin, *wo unto thee* Bethsaida; *for if those mighty Works which have been done in you, had been done in* Tyre *and* Sydon, *they would have repented long ago in Sackcloth and Ashes*: therefore it shall be more tolerable for those heathen Cities, than for you. And *thou* Capernaum (saith he) *which art exalted unto Heaven*, by my Presence and Abode with you, and the Miracles done among you, *shalt be cast down to Hell*; *for if the mighty Works which have been done in thee, had been done in* Sodom, *it would have remain'd to this day*: Mat. 11. 21, *&c.* And the same or heavier Punishments will befal us, if we fall off from our Faith in Christ, and contemn the Religion he hath so well confirm'd and settled among us.

Lastly, We may learn hence the Blessedness of those that believe and firmly adhere to their Faith in Christ. So Christ himself tells us, *Mat.* 11. where after he had appeal'd to his Miracles for the Proof of his Messiahship, two of which are, *the Lepers are cleans'd, and the Poor have the Gospel preach'd to them*, the two Miracles of this Day; he pronounces those *blessed that are not offended in him*, ver. 6. that is, they who continue stedfast in the Faith, without

out apostatizing or revolting from him, shall e'er long receive the End of their Faith, even the Salvation of their Souls.

DISCOURSE XXIX.

The EPISTLE for the Fourth Sunday after the *Epiphany*.

Rom. 13. 1——8.

Let every Soul be subject to the Higher Powers, for there is no Power but of God; the Powers that be, are ordain'd of God: whosoever therefore resisteth the Power, resisteth the Ordinance of God, &c.

THE Collect for this Day minds us of the many and great Dangers which God knows we are set in the midst of; insomuch that by reason of them and the Frailty of our Natures, we cannot always stand upright: and from thence teaches us to pray for such Strength and Protection, as may support us in all Dangers, and carry us thro all Temptations. To this end,

The Epistle for the Day directs us to the great Duty of Subjection to Superiours, as a good means to procure their Protection, and to prevent the many and great Evils and Dangers of Resistance.

It begins with this general Admonition, *Let every Soul be subject to the Higher Powers.* Where we have,

First, The Duty enjoin'd; and that is, *Subjection.*

Secondly, The Persons that are to pay it; and that is, *every Soul.*

Thirdly, The Persons to whom it is to be paid; and those are, *to the Higher Powers.* For the

First, The Duty here enjoin'd is Subjection, *Let every one be subject.* Subjection here implies a Sense of the Place or Station wherein God hath set us, that is, below or under those who are appointed to rule and govern us; and like-

likewiſe the behaving our ſelves towards them accordingly; both which are to be expreſs'd by honouring their Perſons, and obeying their Laws. *Know them that are over you in the Lord*, ſaith the Apoſtle; and ſhew your Subjection to them,

1*ſt*, By honouring their Perſons, and eſteeming them ſacred and inviolable, dignify'd with God's own Name, ſtamp'd with his Image, and inveſted with his Authority; looking upon them as Perſons anointed of God to be his Deputies and Viceroys to govern this lower World, and ſo rais'd above the level of others to receive the Reſpect and Veneration of Mankind. Hence St. *Peter* couples together the Fear of God with honouring the King; knowing that we cannot rightly do the one without the other. And this Honour is to be perform'd, not only by the inward Regard or Reverence of the Mind, in thinking honourably of them; but by the outward Reſpect and Reverence of the Body, in ſpeaking worthily, and demeaning our ſelves becomingly towards them.

But, 2*dly*, To be ſubject, is not only to reverence the Perſons, but to obey the Laws of Superiours. This is the principal Branch of the Subjection here enjoin'd, without which, the other is but mere Ceremony and Compliment: for to make a ſhew of honouring the Perſons, without obſerving the lawful Commands of our Governours, is like the *Jews* Carriage to our Saviour, in ſaying, *Hail Maſter!* and *Crucify him:* 'tis to ſeparate the Perſon from the Power, and by a Pretence of courting the one, to undermine and deſtroy the other. So that the Prince may ſay in this Caſe as our Saviour did in another, *Why call ye me Lord and King, and do not the thing that I command you?* And therefore *Subjection to Principalities and Powers* is deſcrib'd by *obeying Magiſtrates*, Tit. 3. 1. which is a Duty frequently and earneſtly preſs'd in Holy Scripture: *Obey them that have the Rule over you in the Lord*, ſaith the Apoſtle; and *ſubmit to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's ſake*; 1 Pet. 2. 13. But,

Secondly, Who are to pay this Duty of Subjection? Why, every one. So we are here told, *Let every Soul be ſubject*; High and Low, Rich and Poor, one with another, none are exempted; neither Apoſtles or Teachers, but all Men, Clergy as well as Laity, Noble and Ignoble, all muſt be ſubject: 'tis *every Soul*, without any Limitation or Ex-

ception; for as all Men ſtand in need of the Protection of Government, and partake of the Benefit of it, ſo are they all to pay Obedience to it, and none may pretend to an Immunity from it.

Thirdly, But to whom is this Subjection to be paid? Why that, we are here told, is to the Higher Powers; *Let every Soul be ſubject to the Higher Powers*: that is, as St. *Peter* explains it, *Firſt, to the King as ſupreme*; and next, *To Governours, as theſe that are ſent by him.* Where the Supremacy of Kings, and the Subordination of inferiour Governours to them, and likewiſe the Submiſſion and Obedience of Subjects to both, are expreſly aſſerted. In ſhort, the Higher Powers are all that in any Station in Church or State are plac'd above us; *As the King, and all that are put in Authority under him*; to whom every Soul is here ſtrictly requir'd to be ſubject: Which Duty is preſs'd, in the following words, by ſundry Arguments.

The *1ſt* whereof is taken from the Author and Original of Power, in theſe words; *There is no Power but of God; the Powers that be, are ordain'd of God.* The Power of Princes is not, as ſome would have it, an Ordinance of Men, but of God; it proceeds not from any Compact or Contrivance of the People, but is an Appointment or Ordinance of our Maker. *There is no Power but of God*, either by Delegation or Permiſſion: for all Power both in Heaven and Earth is his, and none can have any ſhare in it, but what by the Courſe of Divine Providence is deriv'd from him: *By me Kings reign*, (ſaith he) *and Princes decree Juſtice.* 'Tis God's Authority by which our Superiours act, and 'tis He alone that gives them their Authority. For tho the Laws enacted by them are ſometimes ſtil'd, *the Ordinances of Men*; yet the Power by which they make them, is the Ordinance of God: for ſo the next words tell us, *The Powers that be, are ordained of God.* From whence the Apoſtle infers,

2dly, Another Argument for Subjection, taken from the Sinfulneſs of Reſiſtance; *Whoſoever therefore reſiſteth the Power, reſiſteth an Ordinance of God.* Where by reſiſting we are to underſtand, all the Ways and Methods of oppoſing, or ſetting our ſelves againſt our Superiours; together with all the Means and Tendencies thereunto, by Thought, Word, or Deed.

He

He that thinketh or wiſhes any Evil to them, reſiſts them in his Heart; for he wants no Will, but the Opportunity only of doing them the greateſt Miſchief: And therefore we are bid not *to curſe the King, no not in our very Thoughts*; Eccleſ. 10. 20.

He that plots and contrives againſt his Prince, reſiſts him with his Head, by ſetting his Wits and his Brains a working againſt him. So did *Achitophel* againſt *David*, and ſo do all that ſecretly form and carry on Deſigns againſt lawful Authority; who are ſaid *to take Counſel againſt the Lord and againſt his Anointed*, and to *be confederate againſt both*. Again,

He that ſpeaks Evil of Princes, and ſlanders the Footſteps of God's Anointed, reſiſts them with the Tongue, which by murdering their good Name oftimes deſtroys both their Perſon and Government: for which reaſon we are ſtrictly charg'd, *not to ſpeak Evil of the Ruler of the People*, nor *ſlander the Lord's Anointed*. Above all,

He that takes up Arms and fights againſt his Prince, reſiſts him with the Hand: and this is the higheſt degree of Reſiſtance, to which all the other tend; and therefore we are forbid to *touch the Lord's Anointed*, for *none can ſtretch forth the Hand againſt him and be blameleſs*.

Now the Sinfulneſs of Reſiſtance is here ſet forth, by *its reſiſting the Ordinance of God*: that is, ſince it hath pleaſed God to appoint Magiſtrates to order and govern the World in his ſtead; to oppoſe or reſiſt them, is to ſet our ſelves againſt God, and to defy our Maker. To lift up our Hands againſt thoſe whom God hath ſet over us, is to fight againſt him; 'tis a quarrelling with the Methods of his Providence, and in effect denying him the Government of the World; which is the greateſt Affront and Indignity that can be offer'd to him, and will be ſure to meet with a ſutable Puniſhment. And this will lead me,

3*dly*, To another Argument here brought for Subjection, taken from the Danger of Reſiſtance, in theſe words, *And they that reſiſt ſhall receive to themſelves Damnation*. The Word here render'd *Damnation*, in the Original ſignifies Judgment, or the juſt Puniſhment of a Crime; and is apply'd as well to temporal as eternal Puniſhments. So the unworthy Receivers of Chriſt's Body, eating and drinking their own Damnation, is expounded, as well of temporal Evils and Diſeaſes, as of future and eternal Puniſhments.

In like manner the Damnation here threatned to Reſiſters, is to be underſtood partly of the juſt Puniſhments of this Life, and partly of everlaſting Deſtruction in the World to come. As,

1. I ſay, *they that reſiſt ſhall receive to themſelves Damnation*; that is, Condemnation and remarkable Judgments here in this World. 'Tis well known, how Vengeance commonly purſues Rebels and Traitors, and brings them to infamous and untimely ends, leaving their Bones behind them as the ſad and laſting Monuments of their Rebellion: their ſecret Conſpiracies uſually come to light, and their open Reſiſtance ſeldom goes unpuniſhed; and that either immediately by the Hand of God, or more frequently by the Hands of Men. Sometimes God Almighty himſelf interpoſes and puniſhes Rebels immediately by his own Hand: So the *Iſraelites*, for their Rebellion, were ſmitten with the Peſtilence; and *Corah* and his Complices for opening their Mouths againſt *Moſes* and *Aaron*, had the Earth to open its Mouth and ſwallow them up. But this is commonly done by the Hands of Men; the ſupreme Magiſtrate, for his own and his People's Safety, bringing Rebels and Traitors to condign Puniſhment, and by ſuch Examples preſerving the Peace and Quiet of his Subjects: of which we our ſelves have known many Inſtances. But if any prove ſo fortunate as to proſper in their Rebellion, and eſcape the Cenſure and Penalties of human Laws; yet they ſhall ſurely *receive Damnation* in the next World: their Sin will purſue them to God's Tribunal, and there bring them to eternal Deſtruction of Body and Soul. Tho ſome crafty Offenders of this kind may, by cloaking their Rebellion with Religion, not only eſcape, but be rewarded too for their Wickedneſs; yet Juſtice will certainly overtake them in the next World, where they ſhall neither avoid the Sentence, nor flee from the Wrath to come. Impunity indeed may harden them here, and Succeſs embolden them in their evil Courſes; but a Day of Reckoning is coming, when they ſhall dearly rue for theſe things: and however they themſelves may be lull'd into a fatal Security, yet Divine Vengeance will awaken them, and *their Damnation ſlumbereth not*. There will then be no hiding or palliating this Guilt with any falſe Colours, and much leſs any bribing or evading the juſt Puniſhment of it; no, all Contempt of Authority will be then found a Contempt of God, and aſſuredly receive the Sentence of Damnation.

4*thly*,

4*thly*, Another Argument here urg'd for Subjection, is taken from the End and Uſefulneſs of Government; which is for the Encouragement of Vertue, and the Diſcouragement of Vice: ſo the next Words tell us, *For Rulers are not a Terror to Good Works, but to the Evil*; Ver. 3. The Deſign of Government is not to affright or diſcountenance good and loyal Perſons, but to terrify the Evil and the Diſobedient: So St. *Peter* likewiſe tells us, that Governours *are ſent for the Puniſhment of Evil-Doers, and for the Praiſe of them that do well*; 1 Pet. 2. 14. *Parcere ſubjectis & debellare ſuperbos*; to defend and reward the Good, and to puniſh and ſubdue the Bad.

Wilt thou then (ſaith our Apoſtle) *not be afraid of the Power? Do that which is good, and thou ſhalt have praiſe of the ſame:* That is, do not diſturb thy ſelf with any unneceſſary Fears of Princes becoming Tyrants, nor think upon every ſlight Occaſion, of which thou art no competent Judg, that he uſeth his Power amiſs; this is none of thy Province: look thou to thy own Duty, and if thou deſign no Ill, there will be little reaſon to fear or ſuſpect any ill from the Magiſtrate: Do thou that which is good, and inſtead of Puniſhment thou ſhalt have Praiſe from him. God who governs the World, will ſo over-rule the Hearts of Kings, as to make them Inſtruments of procuring much Good, and averting much Evil from thee; ſo that if thou wouldſt make a prudent Proviſion for thy ſelf, and deſireſt to be ſecure from the Fears and Frowns of the Magiſtrate, do not offend againſt his Laws, but do what he commands, and then in all probability thou ſhalt find nothing but Encouragement and Reward from him. The reaſon whereof is added in the next words; *For he is the Miniſter of God to thee for Good*: that is, God hath appointed Kings not barely for State and Grandeur, but for the Good and Welfare of the People, to preſerve their Rights, and to protect them from Wrong; that every one may ſit quietly under his own Vine, and reap the Fruits of his own Labours. So St. *Peter* likewiſe informs us, that God hath ſet up Princes, and impower'd them to depute inferiour Magiſtrates and Rulers, *that we may live quiet and peaceable Lives in all Godlineſs and Honeſty*. And generally they who keep within the Sphere of their own Duty, leading godly, loyal, and honeſt Lives, live in great Peace and Quietneſs: 'Tis the Proud and Ambitious, the inordinate Lovers of Preheminence and worldly Intereſt, that diſturb Government

and embroil Kingdoms, and draw upon them the direful Effects and Conſequents of it. So that if thou wilt not incur the Wrath and Puniſhment of the Magiſtrate, take care to keep to the Rules of Honeſty and Vertue, and then thou needſt not be afraid of any Terror or Trouble from him; for he is God's Officer appointed for the Defence and Quiet of ſuch as live juſtly and vertuouſly, and is not wont to puniſh for Well-doing, but for doing Ill.

But if thou do that which is Evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the Sword in vain. If thou wilfully violate the Laws, and break the Peace of Church or State, thou haſt juſt reaſon to be afraid; for the Magiſtrate is intruſted with the Sword of Juſtice not barely for Show and Oſtentation, nor to ſuffer it to ruſt in the Scabbard; but to draw it out for the Terror of Evil-Doers, as well as the Defence of them that do well. *He is the Miniſter of God* for both; not only to ſuccour and ſecure the Innocent, but to be *a Revenger, to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil.* For ſo he is oblig'd to do, as he is God's Officer and Commiſſioner.

From all which the Apoſtle infers, in the next Verſe, the Neceſſity of Subjection; *Wherefore ye muſt needs be ſubject, not only for Wrath, but for Conſcience ſake.* Meaning, that all due Obedience and Submiſſion is to be paid to Magiſtrates, and that not merely from a Principle of Dread, or Fear of Puniſhment, which may be ſometimes avoided or ſuſpended; but from a Principle of Conſcience towards God, who hath laid this Duty and Obligation upon us, and requir'd all Chriſtians to pay it for his ſake. To which a reaſon is added in the next Words:

For, for this cauſe pay you Tribute alſo; for they are God's Miniſters, attending continually on this very thing. Where we have the reaſon, why Tribute and Cuſtoms are paid to Kings; becauſe they are Commiſſioners ſent by God, who having a full Right to all that we poſſeſs, may juſtly aſſign a part of it to his Miniſters to ſecure the reſt, which is highly reaſonable; ſince they ſpend their Time and Themſelves in arduous and difficult Tasks, merely to attend our Safety, and to provide for our Peace and Welfare. For which reaſon the common Conſent of all Nations hath led them to pay Tribute to their Princes, as a Token of Subjection to them, as an Aid to their Office, and a Recompence of the Pains taken for the Good of the People. And therefore the Apoſtle might very well ſubjoin the Advice in the following words:

Render

Render therefore to all, their Dues; Tribute to whom Tribute is due; Cuſtom to whom Cuſtom, Fear to whom Fear, Honour to whom Honour: that is, from theſe things well conſider'd, there reſults a natural and neceſſary Obligation, to render to Princes thoſe Aids and Aſſiſtances that belong to their Office, and to diſcharge all ſuch ordinary and extraordinary Payments, as their weighty Affairs ſhall require. Our Saviour commanded Tribute to be paid to Heathen Emperors: And when it was demanded of him and *Peter*, he wrought a Miracle to pay it, leſt they ſhould offend, *Matth.* 17. When the *Phariſees* and *Herodians*, to entrap him, ask'd him the Queſtion, *Is it lawful to give Tribute unto* Cæſar? he replied to them, *Render unto* Cæſar *the things that are* Cæſar's: which is the ſame with our Apoſtle's Advice here, *Render Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Cuſtom to whom Cuſtom:* both which are due to Sovereign Princes, as alſo that Fear, Honour, and Reverence, which by the Laws of God and Man belong to their Authority and Office.

This is briefly the Senſe and Subſtance of this Day's Epiſtle, which contains the Nature and Neceſſity of Subjection to the Higher Powers, together with the Reaſons and Arguments that enforce it, and the Motives and Principles upon which it is to be perform'd.

The Uſe we are to make of it will chiefly lie in theſe three things:

(1.) To learn and practiſe this great Duty of Subjection to our Superiours in Church and State.

(2.) To abhor and avoid all manner of Reſiſtance.

(3.) Inſtead of diſturbing and undermining Government, to contribute what we can to the Maintenance and Support of it. Of each a word. And,

(1.) From this Diſcourſe, we may learn to obſerve and practiſe this great Duty of Obedience and Subjection to the Higher Powers, and that not as Slaves, for fear of the Laſh and the juſt Puniſhments that may be inflicted by them; but as good Subjects and the Servants of God, out of a ſenſe of Love and Duty to both. This the Riſe of Power which is deriv'd from God, and the many Benefits we enjoy by it, may juſtly exact from us. There were ſome in the Apoſtles Days, who interpreted the Liberty purchaſed by Chriſt, to be a Freedom from the Yoke of Government; and there are too many in our Days, who ſhake off the

Yoke of Government upon the ſame or like Pretence: but the Doctrine and Example of Chriſt and his Apoſtles have abundantly refuted this Error; and the many Evils we have ſuffer'd by it, may teach us for ever to hate and abandon it, and to learn the Leſſon of Loyalty and Obedience to thoſe whom God is pleas'd to ſet over us.

(2.) From this Diſcourſe we may learn to abhor and avoid all manner of Reſiſtance, which is directly contrary to the Duty of Subjection. We have ſeen the Sinfulneſs and Danger of it; 'tis a reſiſting the Ordinance of God, and thereby incurring the Peril of Damnation. Let us then carefully avoid all the Steps and Degrees leading to Rebellion, not harbouring any evil Thoughts or Wiſhes againſt our Superiours, which are apt to break out into evil Speeches and worſe Actions: which we ſhould the rather do, becauſe *Rebellion is as the Sin of Witchcraft*; it intoxicates and inveigles, ſpreads like a Gangrene, and few find the Evil of it till they feel it: 'tis a publick Miſchief, that involves whole Countries in Miſery and Deſolation; for it dyes the Fields with Blood, and covers the Plains with the Carcaſes of the Slain. In a word, it expoſes to all the Dangers of this World, and the Damnation of the next.

Wherefore, in the laſt place, inſtead of ſubverting and undermining, let us contribute what we can to the ſupporting of Government; by paying Tribute to our Prince, and keeping up, as far as may be, the Fear, Honour, and Reverence that is due to the Higher Powers: ſo ſhall we live the more eaſily here, and the more happily hereafter. Which God grant, *&c.*

DISCOURSE XXX.

The GOSPEL for the Fourth Sunday after the *Epiphany*.

St. Matthew viii. 23, to the end.

And when he was entred into a Ship, his Diſciples followed him. And behold! there aroſe a great Tempeſt in the Sea, inſomuch that the Ship was cover'd with the Waves; but he was aſleep, and his Diſciples came to him, and awoke him, ſaying, Lord ſave us, we periſh. And he ſaid unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little Faith, &c.

OF the Collect for this Day, which puts us in mind of the many and great Dangers with which we are beſet, I have already ſpoken: And likewiſe of the Epiſtle for the Day, which directs us to one way of eſcaping them; and that is, by Subjection to Superiours, which will gain us the Favour and Protection of Magiſtrates, and thereby defend us from many Perils and Dangers that muſt otherwiſe befal us. I proceed now to

The Goſpel for this Day, which minds us of other Dangers, and of another way of eſcaping them; and that is, by calling upon God, who is ever ready to hear and deliver us out of all our Troubles. In ſpeaking to the Words of this Goſpel, 'twill be requiſite to conſider the Occaſion and Connection of them with the foregoing; which is briefly this.

When Chriſt had finiſh'd his Divine Sermon on the Mount, he came down from the Mountain, with great Multitudes following him; and coming to *Capernaum*, he there confirm'd the Truth of his Doctrine with Miracles and many wonderful Works, as the preceding part of the Chapter informs us, where we read of his curing of a Leper of a dangerous Leproſy, *ver.* 2, 3. of his healing a Centurion's Servant of a grievous Palſy, *ver.* 6, 7, &c. of his

his reſtoring *Peter*'s Wife's Mother of a long and inveterate Fever, *ver.* 14, 15. *And when Even was come, they brought unto him many that were poſſeſſed with Devils; and he caſt out the Spirits with his Word, and healed all that were ſick: ver.* 16. Now when Jeſus ſaw great multitudes about him, to get out of the Throng and Crowd of People, he gave commandment to depart unto the other ſide of the Lake of *Genneſareth*, or the Sea of *Tiberias*, out of a great Compaſſion (as 'tis thought) to the many miſerable Demoniacks or poſſeſs'd Perſons that were there. But the Multitude ſtill following him to the ſhore, he preach'd unto them till the Evening, and then took ſhipping: And here beginneth the Goſpel for this Day; *And when he was entred into a Ship, his Diſciples*, and none elſe, *followed him.* Where after ſome ſhort Diſcourſe with his Diſciples alone, he bid them launch out, and make towards the other ſide. When they were ſet forth, our Saviour, weary'd with the Work and Buſineſs of the Day, retir'd to the hinder part of the Ship, and there lay down to compoſe himſelf to Sleep: ſo the next Verſe tells us, that *he was aſleep.* Now this gives us to underſtand, that Chriſt was truly a Man, ſubject to the like Infirmities with our ſelves: for he ate, and drank, and ſlept, as we do; was weary and faint, as we are; and was every way like unto us, Sin only excepted: for *as Children are Partakers of Fleſh and Blood, he likewiſe took part of the ſame.* He grew up by the ſame degrees, increaſing in Wiſdom and Stature as we do; he was fed with the ſame Nouriſhment, and was liable to the ſame Weakneſſes as we are. Hence the Apoſtle declares, that *we have not an High Prieſt who cannot be touched with the feeling of our Infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin*; Heb. 4. 15. And *ſo it behoved him* (ſaith the ſame Apoſtle) *in all things to be made like unto his Brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Prieſt in things pertaining unto God, to make Reconciliation for the Sins of the People; for in that he himſelf ſuffer'd, being tempted, he is able to ſuccour them that are tempted.* Heb. 2. 16, 17, 18. Where his Sufferings ſhew the Verity of his human Nature, and that he was truly a Man like our ſelves.

This is to be believ'd againſt a ſort of Hereticks, who affirm'd Chriſt not to be really a Man, but only a Ghoſt or Apparition; that he aſſum'd only a Body of Air, and therein appear'd and converſed for a while, and then vaniſh'd away. Againſt theſe we find the Fathers often arguing,

guing, from the Properties of a Body, which were all in him; for he was ſeen, heard, and felt, and had all the Senſes and Qualities that belong to a Body, and to no other. Yea, we find Chriſt himſelf confuting this Error, by condeſcending to the Faith of his Apoſtle; for when after his Reſurrection ſome of them were terrify'd and affrighted at him, as if they had ſeen a Spirit, he bid them handle him and ſee him, for a Spirit had not Fleſh and Bones as they ſaw him to have: and this we learn here, by his Wearineſs and lying down to ſleep.

But while he was thus taking his reſt, and the Ship gone a little out into the Sea, *Behold! there aroſe a great Tempeſt in the Sea, inſomuch that the Ship was covered with the Waves:* which Waves beating into the Ship, almoſt fill'd it with Water, and made it juſt ready to ſink. This our Saviour permitted, to try the Faith of his Diſciples, and to make them ſenſible of their own Weakneſs. Now this may teach us, in the midſt of a Calm to expect and provide for a Storm; for this World is like the troubled Sea, that cannot reſt, and our State and Condition in it ebbs and flows like that: ſometimes a proſperous Gale fills our Sails, and then we go on with great Alacrity and Chearfulneſs; by and by a Storm ariſes, and then we are in danger of ſinking or ſuffering ſhipwreck. Joy and Sorrow here take their turns, and Proſperity is chequer'd and mingled with Adverſity. God Almighty is pleas'd to exerciſe even the beſt Men with Troubles and Afflictions here, not for their Prejudice, but for their great Good, to try their Faith, and to exerciſe their Patience; both which are beſt refin'd in the Furnace of Affliction, for they thereby become the more conſpicuous, and render their Reward the more glorious: which may put us all upon looking and preparing our ſelves for theſe things, to be arm'd againſt they come, that we be not ſurpriz'd or unprovided at their coming; and then no Temptation can befal us, from which we cannot find a way to eſcape, that we may be able to bear it.

But how did the Diſciples behave themſelves in this great and ſudden Storm? Why, being much affrighted (as the next words declare) *they came to our Saviour, and awoke him, ſaying, Lord ſave us, we periſh.* Their Fear drove them to Chriſt; and awaking him out of Sleep, they call'd upon him to preſerve them from ſinking, and to help them out of their great and imminent Danger. Afflictions bring thoſe unto God, who would otherwiſe keep at a diſtance from

from him, and cauſe them to cry unto him, whom at other times they utterly neglect and forget. The Mariners in a Storm call'd each of them upon their God in their Prayers, whom in a Calm they never mention'd but in their Oaths and Imprecations. *David* in his Proſperity ſaid, *I ſhall never be moved, thou Lord haſt made my Mountain to ſtand ſo ſtrong.* He began to grow ſecure, and to build too much upon the Firmneſs of his Strength and Station; till God ſaw fit to ſhake him by an Affliction, and then he ſoon found his own Weakneſs; which made him ſay, *Thou hideſt thy Face from me, and I was troubled.* Hence we find him acknowledging, that before he was troubled he went aſtray, and therefore that it was good for him to be afflicted: and if we make a right uſe of our Troubles, they will ſtill work together for good; that is, for our preſent Peace and Comfort here, and for the Increaſe of our future Glory. *In their Afflictions* (ſaith God) *they will ſeek me early:* and ſo we find the Diſciples here did, in the Extremity of the Tempeſt, crying out, *Lord ſave us, or elſe we periſh.*

Where we may obſerve farther, that the Diſciples did not uſe many words in their Prayer, nor run out their Petitions, like the *Phariſees*, into Length and Loquacity. They did not enlarge upon the Raging of the Sea, the Fury of the Winds, or the Boiſterouſneſs of the Waves, fruitful Topicks of Invention and Eloquence; but darted out their Requeſt in a ſhort ejaculatory Petition, *Lord ſave us, we periſh:* like the poor Publican, *Lord be merciful to me a Sinner!* which prevail'd more for his Juſtification, than the long Prayer of the *Phariſee.* God Almighty neither needs nor cares for many words; and if a Word be enough to the Wiſe, ſure there can be no need of many to him, who is Wiſdom it ſelf. *Solomon*, the wiſeſt of Men, bids us to conſider, *That God is in Heaven, and we upon Earth; and therefore wills that our Words unto him ſhould be few.* And our Bleſſed Saviour hath contracted all our Wants and Deſires into a ſhort Form of Prayer of his own compoſing, for the uſe of his Followers; which may teach us to avoid the Battology and much ſpeaking of the Heathens, and likewiſe the vain Repetitions and long Prayers of the *Phariſees*, and to prefer a well-compos'd Devotion before long *extempore* Effuſions.

But what was our Saviour's Anſwer to the Prayer of the Diſciples? Why,

1ſt, He

1*st*, He rebuk'd them for their great Fear and want of Faith in him, *saying unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little Faith?* They had before own'd him for the Son of God, and were, by the many Miracles they had seen, convinc'd of his Divine and Almighty Power; and what reason could they have to doubt of his Ability to help them in the greatest Storm? Sure they need not fear Death in the company of the Lord of Life, and they must be Men of little Faith, to distrust the Conduct of such an All-wise and Almighty Pilot. This unreasonable Fear he blamed in them, as an Argument of great Weakness, and a Reflection upon his Divine Power and Goodness.

2*dly*, *He arose, and rebuk'd the Winds and the Sea*, saying, as St. *Mark* relates it, *Peace, be still, and there was a great Calm. At his word* (saith the Psalmist) *the stormy Wind ariseth, which lifteth up the Waves thereof; they are carry'd up to the Heaven, and down again to the Deep; their Soul melteth away because of the Trouble, but when they cry unto the Lord in their Trouble, he delivereth them out of their Distress; for he maketh the Storm to cease, so that the Waves thereof are still: then are they glad, because they are at rest, and so he bringeth them to the Haven, where they would be:* Psal. 107. 25, 26, &c. This is either a Prediction or a Description of the Disciples Case in this Tempest, where, at God's Command, the Waves beat into the Ship, and almost fill'd it with Water. In this Distress they cry'd unto the Lord for help to save them from sinking, which they soon found; for at Christ's Word the Storm presently ceas'd, and turn'd into a great Calm.

That which we are to learn from hence, is, the Efficacy and Success of a hearty and fervent Prayer, which St. *James* tells us prevaileth much, as it did in this Case, and might be easily prov'd in many other; which should teach us to have recourse to it, as the best Remedy in all our Extremities. But what follow'd hereupon? Why, *the Men marvell'd, saying, What manner of Man is this, that even the Winds and the Sea obey him?* And well they might, for there was never Man like him, he was God as well as Man, and that gave him the power over the Winds and Sea. He spake all things into Being by his Word, both in Heaven and Earth, the Sea, and in all deep Places, and therefore might well have the Rule and Command of them: *By his Word was the Heavens made, and the Host of them by the Breath of his Mouth; it is he that commandeth the Waters,*

Waters, and ſtilleth the raging of the Sea; at his Rebuke they flee, at the Voice of his Thunder they are afraid; the Voice of the Lord is mighty in Operation, the Voice of the Lord is a glorious Voice: for if he ſpeak the Word, the Winds are hush'd; and if he command, the Waters of the Sea ſtand ſtill. So here, by the Breath of his Mouth, he aſſuag'd a violent Tempeſt, and by a word's ſpeaking created a great Calm: which may teach us to magnify and adore his infinite Power and Greatneſs, to call upon him in times of Diſtreſs, and to put our Truſt in him in the greateſt Dangers.

But to go on with our Saviour's Voyage: When he and his Diſciples were ſafely arriv'd *at the other ſide of the Lake, they landed in the Country of the* Gadarens *or* Gergeſenes, ſuppos'd to be the antient Country of the *Gergaſhites*, mention'd in *Gen.* 10. 16. a Region given by *Moſes* to the Tribe of *Reuben*, *Dan*, and half the Tribe of *Manaſſes*; inhabited, in our Saviour's time, partly by *Jews*, but moſtly by the *Gentiles*, as appears by the multitude of Swine nouriſh'd there, which were us'd and ſold by the *Gentiles*, but hated and abominated by the *Jews*.

Now this Country at that time abounded much with Demoniacks, and Perſons poſſeſs'd with evil Spirits, which was the occaſion of our Saviour's going thither, *viz.* to ſhew his Power and Goodneſs in diſpoſſeſſing them. Accordingly, as *ſoon as he was come into the Country, there met him two poſſeſs'd with Devils, coming out of the Tombs, exceeding fierce, ſo that no Man might paſs by that way.* Theſe miſerable Wretches were wofully haraſs'd by evil Spirits, haunting in and about the Tombs, Places of great Horror and Solitude, ſought out by the Devils as Places moſt advantageous to them. However, at Chriſt's coming to them, they ſoon perceiv'd who and what he was; and being ſtruck with a ſudden Dread of his Power and Preſence, *behold, they cry'd out, ſaying, What have we to do with thee, Jeſus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?* Where confeſſing him to be the Son of God, and Saviour of Mankind, they beg him to let them alone, pleading their not having any thing to do with him, either in moleſting or affronting of him; and therefore adjure him not preſently to expel them out of the Country, or ſend them too ſoon into the Abyſs appointed for them, which would be to torment them before the time. In which words they urge, that tho they are reſerv'd in Chains of Darkneſs to the Judgment of the Laſt

Day;

Day, yet they have, by God's Permission, certain Circuits and Regions in the Air assign'd to them, where they have the liberty to range and rule till that time; and therefore since the time of remanding them to their Prisons is not yet come, they beseech him not to hasten it, or torment them before the time. *Now there was at that time, a good way off from them, an Herd of many Swines feeding:* for *Gadara* is by *Josephus* reckon'd among the *Grecian* Cities that *Pompey* took away from the *Jews*; and being then inhabited by the *Syrians*, they might well abound with Swine, tho they were not before permitted by the *Jews*. Hereupon

The Devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the Herd of Swine. The Devils knowing that Christ would dispossess them, to shew his Power for the Conversion of the Country, they besought him to permit them at least to enter into the Swine, that is, unclean Spirits into unclean Beasts: which thing they desir'd, with a design to incense the *Gadarens* and Owners of the Swine against our Lord; and so they accordingly did, as we shall see after. However, Christ granted the Request of these evil Spirits, for he said unto them, *Go*; *he gave them leave*, saith St. *Mark*; *he suffer'd them*, saith St. *Luke*: *so they came out, and went into the Herd of Swine.* From whence one hath wittily observ'd, that the Devil will play a small Game rather than stand out; if he cannot stay in Men, he will go into the Swine; and if he cannot do Mischief one way, he will try another. He is restless and busy in carrying on his wicked Designs; and when he is beaten out of one Hold, he will be ever seeking another. Hence he is said to be still compassing the Earth, going to and fro, seeking whom he may devour; which shews both his Subtlety and his Rage, and likewise how like unto him are all they who study and delight in doing Mischief. These are said to be of their Father the Devil, that his Works they do, and that he will pay them their Wages. But what happen'd to these Swine after the Devil's Entrance into them? Why, 'tis said, *the whole Herd of them ran violently down a steep Place into the Sea.* Here the fore-mention'd Person observes again, that they must needs go whom the Devil drives. The evil Spirits are active and quick in their Motion, and, like *Jehu*, drive very furiously; for this they chose a steep Place, or the Side of a Hill, the better to hasten and precipitate their Motion. Hence

they

they that are hurry'd on violently in their Career, or run down raſhly from any ſteep Place, are proverbially ſaid to run, as if the Devil were in them: which ſhould teach us to keep at as great a diſtance from, and to hearken to him as little as we can; and rather pray not to be led into Temptation, but to be deliver'd from the evil one. And for our Encouragement, we are told, that *if we reſiſt the Devil, he will flee from us.* We ſee Chriſt's Power over him; and the Apoſtles declare, that the Devils were ſubject unto them thro his Name, and with this Power he hath promis'd to arm all his faithful Followers.

But what became of theſe Swine after this violent Motion? Why, 'tis ſaid, that *they periſh'd in the Waters.* From whence the ſame ingenious Perſon wittily obſerves, that the Devil brought his Hogs to a fair Market. He hurry'd them on headlong to their own Ruin, and ſo will he do with all them that are led by him: which may teach us to be upon our Guard, and to watch againſt the Wiles of the Devil, that we be not inſnar'd or circumvented by him. This is St. *Peter*'s Advice, *Be ſober, be vigilant, becauſe your Adverſary the Devil, like a roaring Lion walketh about, ſeeking whom he may devour*; 1 Pet. 5. 8. *whom reſiſt, ſtedfaſt in the Faith.*

But what effect had theſe things upon the People of the Country? Why, *they that kept the Swine fled, and went their way into the City, and told them every thing, and what was befallen to the Poſſeſs'd of the Devil.* They gave them notice of the Loſs of the Swine, with the occaſion and manner of it, and likewiſe how the evil Spirits, at Chriſt's Command, went out of Perſons poſſeſs'd with them. And then it follows, *And behold the whole City went out to meet Jeſus; and when they ſaw him, they beſought him, that he would depart out of their Coaſts.* Inſtead of being wrought upon by his Miracles to believe in him, and to deſire his Continuance among them, they for a little inconſiderable Damage rudely deſire him to be gone, and to leave their Country, preferring the ſaving of their Swine before the ſaving of their Souls; as if the Devil, upon leaving the Swine, had enter'd into them. And ſuch is the Folly and Miſery of Worldlings, who part with Chriſt for a little Pelf, and value the Loſs of a few periſhing Trifles here on Earth, before that of an everlaſting Treaſure in Heaven: But the Goſpel for this Day teaches better things, *viz.* to follow our Saviour, and to lift up our Minds and Deſires above all earthly

earthly things. Let not then what hath been ſaid be as the caſting of Pearls before Swine; but, with the rich Merchant in the Goſpel, let us ſell all, to purchaſe that Pearl of great Price, that will enrich and ennoble us for ever: Which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE XXXI.

The EPISTLE for the Fifth Sunday after *Epiphany*.

Coloſſ. iii. 12——18.

Put on therefore (as the Elect of God, Holy and Beloved) Bowels of Mercy, Kindneſs, Humbleneſs of Mind, Meekneſs, Long-ſuffering, forbearing and forgiving one another: if any Man have a Quarrel againſt any, even as Chriſt forgave you, ſo alſo do ye, &c.

THE Collect for this Day beſeeches the Lord to keep his Church and Houſhold continually in his true Religion; that they who do lean only upon the Hope of his heavenly Grace, may evermore be defended by his mighty Power. To obtain which Petition,

The Epiſtle for the Day directs to many excellent Vertues or Chriſtian Graces, neceſſary to preſerve the Church in the true Religion, and to engage the Divine Power to protect the Members in it. To which ends, it begins with theſe words; *Put on therefore (as the Elect of God, Holy and Beloved) Bowels of Mercy, Kindneſs, Humbleneſs of Mind, Meekneſs, Long-ſuffering*, &c. where the Apoſtle beſpeaks Chriſtians in the moſt endearing Titles and Expreſſions, ſtiling them, *The Elect of God*, that is, Perſons choſen by him out of the World to be a peculiar People; *Holy*, in reſpect of that holy Profeſſion to which they are call'd; *Beloved*, that is, highly priz'd and valu'd of God, who hath ſet his Love upon them above the reſt of the World. Which Expreſſions he here uſes as ſo many Motives and Inducements to ſuch Duties are are ſuitable to ſo high and eminent Privileges; willing them as ſuch, or as becometh ſuch, to *put on Bowels of Mercy*, &c. The Phraſe of putting on alludes either to Armour, which is put on for Defence, or Apparel, which is put on for Ornament and a Covering; both which give us to underſtand,

that Grace is the beſt Armour and Apparel of the Soul, which we are therefore to put on to guard it from all Evil, and to furniſh it with all manner of Good. And here,

The *1ſt* thing he wills us to put on, is *Bowels of Mercy*; by which we are to underſtand ſuch a tender and compaſſionate Temper, as inclines to commiſerate the Neceſſities of the Poor, and relieve the Wants of the Needy: 'tis oppos'd to Hardneſs of Heart, or ſuch an unrelenting Spirit, upon which the loudeſt Cries and Miſeries of the Poor can make no Impreſſion, or draw any Pity or Relief from it.

2dly, We are bid to put on *Kindneſs*; that is, ſuch an affable, courteous and friendly Diſpoſition, as makes Men ready to do all good Offices to all Men, treating them with Civility and Reſpect, ſpeaking always favourably to and of them, and in all things ſhewing a candid, ingenuous and obliging Behaviour towards them. And this is oppos'd to a Roughneſs and Sourneſs of Behaviour, which is uneaſy to all they converſe with, and is diſtaſteful to all that come near them: like *Nabal*, who was ſo *churliſh that a Man could not ſpeak to him*, call'd therefore a *Son of Belial*; or like the *Phariſees* of old, who were moroſe, ſullen and froward, and troubleſome to all about them. And there are but too many ſtill among us, who pretend to higher Meaſures of Knowledg and Religion than others, and yet are of ſuch waſpiſh, peeviſh and churliſh Spirits, that few can live eaſily by or with them.

3dly, We are here call'd upon to *put on Humbleneſs of Mind*; or as St. *Peter* expreſſes it, to *be clothed with Humility*: in both which there is an Alluſion to a Garment, and it ſignifies that Humility is the Badg of our Chriſtianity, which is therefore to be put on and worn by all Chriſtians. Now this Humbleneſs of Mind implies low and mean Thoughts of our ſelves, *in Honour preferring one another*, and *eſteeming others better than our ſelves*; and ſo 'tis oppos'd to Pride, which is the aſſuming more Honour to our ſelves than belongs to us, and thence lifting up our ſelves above others, and ſo ſwelling with vain Conceit, as to deſpiſe and look down with Contempt on thoſe that perhaps are far before or above them.

4thly, We are here commanded to *put on Meekneſs*; that is, ſuch a Mildneſs or Gentleneſs of Temper as is not eaſily ruffled with Paſſion, or diſcompos'd with Diſcontent; but to preſerve a conſtant Calmneſs and Evenneſs of Spirit under all the Evils and Events of Providence: which is to learn that excellent Leſſon of our Saviour, *To be meek and lowly in Heart*, *Mat.* 11. 29. And this is oppos'd to thoſe fiery and unruly Paſſions,

Paſſions, with which ſome are eaſily inflam'd and tranſported; which we are therefore to ſubdue, and in all things to govern our ſelves with a Spirit of Meekneſs.

5*thly*, We are here bid to *put on Long-ſuffering*; that is, a patient bearing of Wrongs, and a Slowneſs to demand Satisfaction: not lying at the catch, or taking all Advantages againſt a Neighbour, much leſs troubling him for any little Offence, nor requiring ſtrict Reparation for every petty Damage or Treſpaſs we may have ſuſtain'd; not breaking off Friendſhip for the firſt Unkindneſs, but paſſing by ſmall Matters, and waiting awhile for the Amendment of greater. And this is oppos'd to a fierce, haſty Spirit, that is mov'd to Revenge and Reparation upon every ſlight Occaſion; whereas Long-ſuffering puts us upon trying all the Arts and Methods of Patience, being unwilling to bring things to extremities, and inclin'd rather to ſuffer, than to do any Wrong: As an Effect of this, we are in the next words,

6*thly*, Put upon *forbearing one another*: This relates to the involuntary Failings and Infirmities of Mankind, which we are rather to pity and bear with, than to publiſh and cenſure. The Wiſe-man tells us, that *the righteous Man falleth ſeven times a day*; and the Apoſtle, that *in many things we offend all*: and as we beſeech God, not *to be extreme to mark all that we do amiſs*; ſo are we in like manner to overlook, and, as much as we may, to excuſe and bear with the Weakneſſes and Miſcarriages of one another. And this is oppos'd to all raſh judging and cenſuring each other; for which, as we have no Authority, ſo have we juſt reaſon to fear and expect, that the *ſame Meaſure we mete unto others ſhould be meaſur'd unto us again*. To this is added,

7*thly*, The *forgiving one another*: *If any Man have a Quarrel againſt any, even as Chriſt forgave you, ſo alſo do ye*. By which we are to underſtand a Readineſs to pardon and paſs by any Offences done to us; which *Solomon* tells us is *the Glory of Man*; or a Willingneſs to be reconcil'd to any that have wronged us, even to our bittereſt Enemies: thereby imitating the Example of our Bleſſed Saviour, who forgave the greateſt Wrongs, and not only pray'd, but dy'd for thoſe that brought him to a bloody and accurſed Death. And this is oppos'd to all Thoughts and Deſires of Revenge, which we are taught carefully to avoid; and inſtead of being *overcome of Evil, to overcome Evil with Good*. Rom. 12. *ult*.

But above all theſe things, we are bid, in the next Verſe, to *put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfectneſs*. Now

Charity comprizes both the Love of God and our Neighbour, and is therefore ſaid to be *the fulfilling of the Law*: and here it is call'd the *Bond of Perfectneſs*, becauſe it includes and faſtens all Chriſtian Graces together, as appears by the thirteenth Chapter of the Firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*; where the Nature and Properties, the Excellency and Extent of this Grace is fully ſet forth: which Portion of Scripture being the Epiſtle for *Quinquageſima* Sunday, is there more largely handled; to which therefore I refer the Reader,

And proceed to the next thing here exhorted to: and that is, to *let the Peace of God rule in your Hearts, to the which alſo ye are called in one Body; and to be thankful:* ver. 15. The Peace of God here, is that Peace of which God is both the Author and the Rewarder. And this Peace is both inward and outward: Inward Peace conſiſts in the Satisfaction of the Mind ariſing from a Senſe of the Pardon of our Sins, and Reconciliation with our Maker, whom we had offended by them: of this is that of the Apoſtle, *being juſtified by Faith, we have Peace with God*, Rom. 5. 1. And this Peace the Apoſtle would have to *rule in our Hearts*; that is, ſo to guide and govern our Affections, as to keep this Peace with God, and preſerve that Comfort and Tranquillity of Mind that reſults from it. But beſide this, there is an outward Peace with Men, hinted at in theſe words, *to which alſo ye are called in one Body*: and this conſiſts in agreeing and uniting together in the Communion of the Church. Nothing is more frequent in the New Teſtament, than to compare the Church to a *Body*, for the ſeveral Members, and the different Offices and Situation of them. The Unity of the Church is ſet forth by *one Body* animated by one Spirit, to ſignify the Harmony, Concord and Sympathy of all the Parts. Now the being call'd or incorporated into this one Body, imports the preſerving this Harmony or Communion of all its Members entire and inviolable; which is the Senſe of that Exhortation, to *keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*; Eph. 4. 2, 3. And this Peace, or Peaceableneſs too, is to *rule our Hearts*, to compoſe our Spirits, and to be (as the original Word ſignifies) an Umpire or Judg to determine all Differences; which may be eaſily done by a meek, humble and peaceable Spirit, but without it never. To which the Apoſtle here adds,

The great Duty of Gratitude, in theſe words, *And be ye thankful*; wherein he wills us to give Thanks for all the Helps and Diſcoveries of Divine Grace, and to be ever ready to return the ſame Mercy and Kindneſs to others, which we receive

ceive or hope for at the hands of God. For the better performing whereof, he adviſes in the next place to the diligent reading and hearing of God's Word, ver. 16. *Let the Word of Chriſt dwell in you richly in all Wiſdom:* where, by *the Word of Chriſt*, we may underſtand in general the Holy Scriptures, and more eſpecially the Doctrine of the Goſpel, which contain the inſpir'd Oracles of God, and the Revelation of the Divine Will, for the Redemption and Salvation of Mankind.

By this *Word's dwelling in us*, is meant not a tranſient View or ſlight Hearing of it, but the making its conſtant Stay and Abode with us. And theſe things differ from each other, as a Gueſt does from an Inhabitant, or a Traveller from the Houſe-keeper; the one is here to-day and gone to-morrow, the other takes up his conſtant Reſidence and Abode with us. So that the Word of God's dwelling in or with us, implies the receiving it not as a Stranger that comes now and then, but as a conſtant Companion and Counſellor, to be ſtill with us to direct us in all our Ways. *The Word is nigh thee* (ſaith St. *Paul*) *even in thy Mouth and in thy Hand*; but let it be in thy Heart too, and make it the Subject not of thy Talk only, but of thy daily Study and Meditation. There are ſome who will ſometimes give the Word the hearing, and afford it a Paſſage into one Ear, and out at the other, but it makes no Stay, much leſs does it *dwell* there; but like the Seed that fell by the Way-ſide, 'tis trodden under feet, and the Fowls of the Air devour it. There are others who will give the Word a little longer Entertainment, and receive it awhile with Joy, being pleas'd with the Matter, or the Method, or the Compoſure of the Sermon; but not receiving it into the Heart, it makes but a ſhort Stay with them, and having no Root, like the Seed that fell upon the Rock, it ſoon withers and dies away. Again, there are others who ſeem more devout and religious Lovers of God's Word, being all for hearing, and mightily frequenting Sermons and Lectures; but this proceeding many times from an outward Show or Form of Godlineſs, or for the promoting of ſome worldly or ſecular End, the Word of God does not dwell or abide with them, but, like the Seed that fell among Thorns, is choak'd by the Love and Cares of the World, and brings forth no Fruit to Perfection. In ſhort then, to let the Word of God dwell in us, is to receive the Love of it into our Hearts, to make it our Delight and Meditation day and night, and to bring forth Fruit with Patience.

But what is it to dwell *richly in us in all Wiſdom?* Why, 'tis to have our Minds enrich'd with the Knowledg of Divine Truths, to increaſe daily in Wiſdom, and to draw conſtant and freſh Supplies out of the inexhauſtible Treaſures of Wiſdom and Knowledg, to anſwer all the Wants and Neceſſities of our Soul; in a word, 'tis to *abound more and more in Knowledg, and in all Judgment, to diſcern and approve things that are excellent*, that we may be *ſincere and without Offence to the Day of Chriſt*, as our Apoſtle pray'd in behalf of the *Philippians*, Chap. 1. 9, 10.

To the hearing of the Word, the Apoſtle here ſubjoins the ſinging of Pſalms, in the next words; *Teaching and admoniſhing one another in Pſalms, and Hymns, and ſpiritual Songs, ſinging with Grace in your Hearts to the Lord:* where Singing is made a ſort of teaching and edifying one another, being a great Help to the raiſing our Hearts, and exciting our Devotion towards God. And upon this, as alſo upon many other places of Scripture, is the Practice of our Church in joining the Singing of Pſalms with the publick Inſtructions ſufficiently warranted. St. *Paul* exhorts the *Epheſians* to be *ſpeaking to themſelves in Pſalms, and Hymns, and ſpiritual Songs, ſinging and making Melody in their Hearts to the Lord*; Chap. 5. 19. this being of excellent Uſe to move the Affections and elevate the Deſires in the Service of God. I know ſome jarring and diſcordant Souls have blam'd the Uſe of Muſick, eſpecially Inſtrumental, in the Worſhip of God; deeming it a part of that *Jewiſh* and Ceremonial Service, that was to ceaſe at Chriſt's Coming. But with how little colour of Reaſon this is objected, will be evident to any that conſiders, that Muſick, either Vocal or Inſtrumental, was never a part of the Ceremonial Law, nor was ever mention'd or preſcrib'd by it: for *Miriam*'s Song upon the *Iſraelites* Deliverance out of *Egypt* was long before the giving of the Law; and Inſtrumental Muſick was inſtituted long after by King *David*, who frequently us'd both himſelf, and commanded them to be us'd upon many ſolemn Occaſions; nor do either of them typify any thing that was to ceaſe at Chriſt's Coming, but have a natural and perpetual Uſe in ſounding forth the Praiſes of our Maker.

Others again tell us, that they find this kind of Muſick rather a Hindrance than a Help to their Devotion. But theſe Men contradict not only the Precept and Practice of King *David*, but the Experience of good Men in all Ages, who have found their Affections ſtirr'd, their Thoughts compos'd,

and

and their Minds better elevated in the Worſhip of God. In ſhort, the Angels ſinging a Hymn at our Saviour's Birth, and the Apoſtles frequent calling upon us to ſing Pſalms, and Hymns, and ſpiritual Songs, with Melody in our Hearts to the Lord, plainly ſhew it to be no needleſs Ceremony, but a uſeful and Goſpel-Duty.

Laſtly, The Epiſtle cloſes up with this general Exhortation; *And whatſoever ye do in Word or Deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jeſus, giving Thanks unto God, and the Father by him:* that is, in all your Actions, civil and religious, have an eye to your Saviour; let all your Prayers be preſented in his Name, which alone can procure them Acceptance, and give them a ſweet-ſmelling Savour; let your Works be all done and offer'd up thro his Merits, which alone can give them all their Worth; and let all your Prayers and good Works be ever accompany'd with Praiſes, paying your continual Thanks and Acknowledgments to the Father for the Mercies vouchſafed to you in Jeſus Chriſt, and directing all your Actions to his Praiſe and Glory.

Theſe are all the material Paſſages of this Day's Epiſtle, the due Improvement whereof will lie in theſe things:

(1.) In labouring to adorn our Souls with the Graces, Vertues, and excellent Qualities recommended in it; as to *put on Bowels of Mercy, Compaſſion and Kindneſs* towards others; or, as St. *Peter* expreſſes it, *to love as Brethren, to be pitiful and courteous*, aiding, comforting, and relieving one another: next, to *put on Humbleneſs of Mind*, in reſpect of our ſelves, *not thinking more highly of our ſelves than we ought to think; but to think ſoberly, according as God hath dealt to every one the Meaſure of Faith*; which St. *Peter* expreſſes by being *clothed with Humility*. Theſe the Apoſtle would have us ſo to put on, as never to put off more; for 'tis Rayment that will never wax old or wear out, and nothing can better become Chriſtians than the Ornaments of a meek and quiet Spirit. Again, let us put on Patience and Long-ſuffering under all the Evils and Sufferings that may befal us, which is the beſt way to make them ſit eaſy upon us, and will make them ſooneſt go off. And therefore St. *James* exhorts us *in Patience to poſſeſs our Souls*; as if Patience alone gave Men the Poſſeſſion of themſelves, and he that is out of Patience, is out of the Poſſeſſion of his Soul.

Moreover, We are exhorted here to *forbearing one another*, not breaking out into haſty and violent Paſſions, nor ſtraining

up Matters to the utmoſt Rigour and Severity of Laws, but bearing with one another's Infirmities, and uſing a Conſcience and Moderation in all our Ways and Dealings with each other. And likewiſe forgiving one another, if any Difference ſhall ariſe, not ſtudying Revenge, or rendring Evil for Evil; but by Chriſt's Example, as well as Precept, forbearing and forgiving one another.

But becauſe Charity is the Sum and Perfection of all other Graces, let us above all things put on that Bond of Perfectneſs, which will make us perfect and compleat, lacking nothing; for that will procure and preſerve Peace both with God and Man: and if that rule and govern our Hearts, it will beget and keep a laſting Peace there too.

(2.) As a Means to attain to all theſe Graces, let us ſet a high Price and Value on the Word of God, and ſuffer it to dwell in us richly in all Wiſdom; for 'tis by the heavenly Seed of God's Word that thoſe Graces are begotten in us. Holy *Job* prefer'd it before his appointed Food; and *David* in the 119th Pſalm labours hard to expreſs the Love and high Eſteem he had of it: by whoſe Examples let us too hear it with Diligence, retain it with Faithfulneſs, and practiſe it with Perſeverance; this being the Food that feeds our Souls to Eternal Life. To which let us add,

(3.) The Singing of Pſalms, and other Hymns, and ſpiritual Songs, making Melody in our Hearts unto God. This is the Way preſcrib'd for our praiſing of God here on Earth, and 'tis that which can beſt fit and prepare us to ſing forth his Praiſes for ever in Heaven. This is the Work of the Angels and glorify'd Spirits above, and the Happineſs to which we hope to attain hereafter; and we muſt now tune our Hearts to the Harmony of that heavenly Quire, if ever we expect to bear a part in that Bleſſed Conſort.

Finally, In all our Actions let us have regard to the Honour of our Maker, that *whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we may do all to the Praiſe and Glory of God.*

Theſe are the Leſſons which we are taught in the Service of this Day; which if we will be perſuaded to learn and practiſe, we ſhall find Reſt and Comfort to our Souls at the preſent, and Everlaſting Peace and Happineſs at the laſt. To which God of his infinite Mercy bring us all, thro the Merits of Jeſus Chriſt, *&c.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE XXXII.

The GOSPEL for the Fifth Sunday after the *Epiphany.*

St. Matthew xiii. 24——30.

The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a Man, which ſowed good Seed in his Field: But while Men ſlept, his Enemy came and ſowed Tares among the Wheat, and went his way; but when the Blade was ſprung up, and brought forth Fruit, then appeared the Tares alſo, &c.

THIS Goſpel for the Day contains the Parable of the Tares; which, in purſuance of the Collect for this Day, diſtinguiſhes the true Religion, in which we pray to be kept, from Errors and falſe Doctrine, from which we deſire to be preſerv'd.

The Parable begins with the Goſpel in theſe words; *The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a Man, that ſowed good Seed in his Field:* where, by *the Kingdom of Heaven*, is to be underſtood the State of the Church here upon Earth, or the Preaching of the Goſpel; for ſo 'tis often underſtood in the New Teſtament, eſpecially in the Parables. By *the Man* that ſowed good Seed in his Field, we are to underſtand Chriſt, the Son of Man, who came down from Heaven to reveal his Father's Will: The *good Seed* are the Children of the Kingdom, or good Chriſtians, that receive his Word, and obey his Will: *The Field* is the World, or more eſpecially the Chriſtian Church planted and inclos'd in it. *But while Men ſlept, his Enemy came and ſowed Tares among the Wheat, and went his way*; where *the Tares* are the Children of the Wicked one, Hereticks or Seducers, who fall themſelves, or lead others into Errors and Diviſions: *The Enemy* that ſowed them is the Devil, who takes the Opportunity of Mens Sloth and Supineneſs, to mingle the Cockle of Error among the Wheat of ſound

ſound Doctrine, and then hides himſelf to keep it from Diſcovery. *But when the Blade ſprung up and brought forth Fruit, then appeared the Tares alſo*; meaning, that tho this was not diſcern'd preſently at the time of ſowing, yet when the Corn grew up, and began to ear, then the Weeds and Darnel were ſeen among it. Errors and Schiſms are at firſt ſown in ſecret, and carry'd on under Diſguiſes; but when they grow up, and overtop or ſuppreſs the Truth, then is the Danger diſcover'd, when 'tis too late to prevent it.

So the Servants of the Houſholder came and ſaid unto him, Sir, didſt not thou ſow good Seed in thy Field? from whence then hath it Tares? He ſaid unto them, An Enemy hath done this. Theſe Words containing the main Drift and Deſign of the whole Parable, I ſhall obſerve in them theſe three things.

Firſt, Our Saviour's great Care in ſowing good Seed in the Field of his Church; *Sir, didſt not thou ſow good Seed in thy Field?* which was not a Queſtion of Doubt, but Certainty, and implies a ſtrong Affirmation that he did ſo.

Secondly, The unhappy Riſe of Errors and Diviſions, notwithſtanding all this Care: *From whence then hath it Tares?* which Queſtion plainly ſuppoſes the Springing up and Growth of them.

Thirdly, The Author and Sower of theſe Tares; which is the Devil, the great Enemy of Chriſt and his Church: *An Enemy hath done this.*

Firſt, I ſay, here is held forth *our Saviour's great Care in ſowing good Seed in the Field of his Church:* Now this good Seed is of ſeveral kinds, and may be reduc'd to the three Heads, of the Doctrine, Diſcipline, Devotion or Communion of the Church; all which are ſo order'd, as may beſt promote the Welfare and Salvation of all its Members.

For the Doctrine of the Church, that conſiſts chiefly in Matters of Faith and Practice: The former teaches us what and how much we are to believe, for which we have the *Holy Scriptures* for our Direction; which are the moſt perfect and infallible Standard of Divine Truths: And theſe again are more briefly ſumm'd up to our hands in that excellent Form of ſound Words, known by the Name of *The Apoſtles Creed*; which is a compleat Syſtem of all the neceſſary Points of Faith, which we are therefore commanded to hold faſt and ſtick to, as the beſt Teſt or Touchſtone of ſound Doctrine: inſomuch that if any teach any Doctrine contrary to it, we are bid not

to receive, but reject it; yea, *if an Angel from Heaven should preach any other Gospel, we are to account him accursed:* Gal. 1. 8, 9.

The latter teaches us what we are to do or practise; for which we have *The Decalogue, or Ten Commandments*, which were dictated by God himself, and deliver'd to the *Jews* by the Hand of *Moses:* and being after corrupted by the Traditions and false Interpretations of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, it was rescu'd by our Saviour from their false Glosses, and refin'd into a more pure and perfect Rule of Life and Manners. There we are directed in our whole Duty both to God and Man; insomuch that there is no Vertue to be follow'd, nor Vice to be shun'd, but is there set forth, back'd with Rewards and Punishments, that are sufficient to invite us to the one, and to deter us from the other.

For the Devotion of the Church, we have *The Lord's Prayer* for our Direction; which being dictated by Him who was best able to teach us, is justly accounted the most absolute and perfect Form of Prayer that was ever given to Mankind, and is therefore to be us'd not only as a Form in the same Words, but as a Pattern and Platform for all our other Prayers; being a brief Summary of all things that are agreeable to the Will of God, and suitable to all our Wants and Necessities. In a word, we are thereby fully instructed in all things that we are to pray for, in relation to God, our Neighbour, and our selves, with an Assurance of being heard by the Merits and Mediation of Christ; who by the many Miracles and wonderful Works that he did, plainly shew'd himself to be *a Teacher come from God*, and that what he deliver'd were the Words of Eternal Life.

This is the good Seed of sound Doctrine and Devotion, which Christ began, and his Ministers still continue to sow in the Field of his Church, and is, by the Blessing of God, plentifully sown among us; which, if it take root in the Hearts of the Hearers, is enough to make them fruitful in every good Word and Work.

For the Discipline of the Church: He hath taken care to enclose and fence his Field, where this good Seed is sown, with the Hedg of a good Government, to promote its Growth, and likewise to guard it against the bold Inroads of the wild Boar of the Forest, and the secret Underminings of the little Foxes. When Christ was upon Earth, he gather'd and govern'd his Church himself; but when he ascended up to Heaven, he left the Care of it to his Apostles, giving them Authority

thority over the other Diſciples, to rule and inſtruct all his Followers, endowing them with Power from on high to that end, and ſaying, *As my Father ſent me, ſo ſend I you.* And to preſerve a Succeſſion of Rulers and Teachers in it to the World's End, he gave a Commiſſion to them to ordain others, promiſing to *be with them to the End of the World.*

This Holy Diſcipline (thanks be to God) is deriv'd down to us to this day, by a conſtant Succeſſion of Biſhops and Paſtors, *to ſet in order the things that are wanting, and to ordain Elders in every City:* which Holy Diſcipline God long preſerve and continue to us, even *as long as the Sun and Moon endureth.* Then,

Laſtly, For the Communion of the Church: He hath added the heavenly Seed of the Holy Euchariſt; for in the Night in which he was betray'd, he took Bread and brake it, and likewiſe took the Cup and bleſſed it, and then gave both to his Diſciples to eat and drink of it, ſaying, *Do this in Remembrance of me:* by which he inſtituted the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as a Memorial of his Death, and as a Bond of Love and Unity among Chriſtians; willing them to meet together at his Table as his Children, and to feaſt together as Brethren, that they might the better live together in Love and Unity.

This Communion of Saints is likewiſe, by the Bleſſing of God, ſtill continu'd to us; by which we remember the Love of our Saviour in that Feaſt of Charity, as a Means to unite our Affections to him and one another; and may we all continue to do ſo till his Coming again.

This is, in ſhort, the good Seed of ſound Doctrine, a well-order'd Diſcipline, a pious Devotion, and a holy Communion, which Chriſt the great Husbandman hath ſowed in the Field of his Church; all which may abundantly convince us of the great Care he hath taken of it: ſo that we may, with the Prophet *Iſaiah*, bring in God Almighty ſpeaking to us, as he did to the *Jews* of old; *My Beloved hath a Vineyard in a very fruitful Hill; he fenced it, gather'd out the Stones thereof, and planted it with the choiceſt Vine; he built a Tower in the midſt of it, and alſo made a Wine-preſs therein: And now* (ſaith he) *judg, I pray you, between me and my Vineyard; what could have been done more to my Vineyard, that I have not done in it?* Iſa. 5. 1, 2, &c. The ſame may Chriſt ſay concerning his Church; he hath ſowed it with the beſt Seed, he hath fenced it with the beſt Government, he hath appointed Overſeers to preſerve the Order, and promote the Edification of it:

and

and what could he have done more for his Church, which he hath not done to it?

And now might not good Fruit be reasonably expected from both, after all this Care? But what follow'd hereupon? Why, the Vineyard, when the Husbandman *look'd for Grapes, brought forth nothing but wild Grapes*, such as might justly set his Teeth on edg against it; for it yielded *Oppression instead of Judgment*, and a *Cry instead of Righteousness*, as we read in that Chapter of *Isaiah*. So likewise in the Field where the Housholder had sown good Corn, there sprung up with it Tares, Cockle and Darnel to choak and suppress it. And this leads me to the

Second Thing propounded, *viz.* the unhapyy Rise of Errors, Heresies and Divisions in the Church, notwithstanding all this Care. This is imply'd in the next Question, *From whence then hath it Tares?* which supposes the Growth of them, and is in the foregoing Verse expresly affirm'd, that *when the Wheat sprang up, the Tares also appear'd with it*: Which gives us to understand, that Errors, Heresies and Schisms will arise and mingle with the good Seed in the Church of Christ.

Now as the good Seed related to the Doctrine, Discipline and Communion of the Church; so the Corruption or Deviation from these are the Tares here mention'd: such as Errors in Matters of Faith, Corruption in Manners, Decays in Discipline, Divisions in Communion, and the like: of the Growth of which, as the History of former Times, so our own sad Experience may abundantly testify.

This bad Fruit soon sprung up in the early Days of Christianity; for quickly after Christ's Appearance, there appear'd *false Christs, and false Prophets*, that arose and deceiv'd many. Our Saviour gave timely notice hereof to his Disciples, saying, *Beware of false Prophets, that come to you in Sheep's Clothing*, that is, with soft and smooth Pretences, *but inwardly are ravening Wolves*; seeking to divide, the more easily to devour: *Mat.* 7. 15. A little after he farther warns them, that *many would come in his Name, saying, Lo! here is Christ, and lo there*; adding this Advice, *Believe them not, and go not after them*; Mat. 24. 5, 23. St *Paul* likewise foretold these things: *I know* (saith he) *that after my Departure grievous Wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the Flock; and of your own selves shall Men arise, speaking perverse things to draw Disciples after them*: Acts 20. 29, 30. When Christ, the great Shepherd, had gather'd

ther'd his Sheep into one Flock, and united them in one Fold, there ſoon aroſe falſe Teachers to ſcatter and divide them, corrupting the Doctrine of the Goſpel, and inſtilling the Poiſon of Errors and Diviſions. Of this kind was *Simon Magus*, who appear'd in the Apoſtles time, and other Hereticks that aroſe after, corrupting the Faith, and diſturbing the Peace of the Church; by whoſe means many were carry'd about with divers and ſtrange Doctrines, and drawn aſide from the Simplicity of the Goſpel.

In the Church of *Corinth* we read of many Schiſms and Factions; one ſaying, *I am of* Paul; another, *I am of* Apollo; a third, *I am of* Cephas; a fourth, *I am of Chriſt:* as if Chriſt was divided, and his Diſciples muſt be ſo too. In the Epiſtle to *Timothy*, we are told of ſome *that crept into Houſes, leading captive ſilly Women, laden with divers Luſts, turning away their Ears from the Truth, and turning them unto Fables*; 2 Tim. 3. 6. St. *Peter* makes mention of *falſe Teachers, that brought in damnable Hereſies, denying the Lord that bought them; and many* (ſaith he) *ſhall follow their pernicious Ways, by reaſon of whom the Way of Truth ſhall be evil ſpoken of:* 2 Pet. 2. 1, 2.

Theſe were the Tares that ſprung up in the Days of the Apoſtles, which have ſince encreas'd unto more Ungodlineſs: Some in our Days denying the God that made them, as the *Atheiſts*, that caſt off all Religion: Others denying the Lord that bought them, as the *Deiſts*, that reject all Divine Revelation: Others again denying the Church that receiv'd them, as *Sectaries and Separatiſts*, who deſtroy all Diſcipline and Order; and by a Parity of Paſtors introduce endleſs Strife and Confuſion.

Tares then, we ſee, will grow up among the good Corn in the Chriſtian Church: yea, the Apoſtle makes them in a manner neceſſary for a Teſt or Trial of our Sincerity; *There muſt be Hereſies* (ſaith he) *that they who are approved may be made manifeſt*; 1 Cor. 11. 19. So that theſe things are permitted in the Church to diſtinguiſh the Good from the Bad; for by them the Children of the Kingdom will at the laſt Day be known from the Children of the Wicked one, as the Wheat will be ſeparated from the Chaff at the Harveſt.

But tho theſe things muſt and will come, yet the Queſtion ſtill returns, *From whence then hath it Tares?* The Anſwer whereunto will bring me to the

Third

Third Thing propounded; which is the *Author or Sower* of them, in these words, *An Enemy hath done this.* Now this Enemy our Saviour himself expounded to be the *Devil*, or the *Children of the Wicked one*; who make it their Business to hinder the Efficacy of Christ's Doctrine, and to frustrate the whole Design of Man's Redemption.

'Twas an old Observation, that *where God hath a Church, the Devil will have a Chappel*; and where the former sows his good Seed, the latter is ever ready to plant his Tares. Hence Strife, Seditions, Heresies, Envyings, and the like, are by the Apostle reckon'd among the *Works of the Flesh*, and the *Wiles of the Devil*; Gal. 5. 20. Eph. 6. 11. God is the *Author of Truth*, and the *Lover of Concord*, as the Devil is the *Father of Lyes*, and the *Fomenter of Discord*: And as Unity and sound Doctrine are the Marks and Ornaments of Christ's Church, so Errors and Divisions are the Badges and Blemishes of the Conventicle; which shews the one to be the *Temple of God*, and the other the *Synagogue of Satan*. But how does the Devil plant these Tares? or by what means does this Enemy of Mankind cause these Errors and Divisions in the Church? Why, this is done partly by the Instigations of Satan himself, and partly by the Temptations of his Emissaries and evil Instruments: both which, by working upon the Ignorance of some, the Supineness of others, and the Pride and corrupt Designs of most, draw them from the Ways of Truth and Peace, into the By-Paths of Error and Delusion.

As for Ignorance, that is much more the Mother of Division than Devotion; for Satan is said to *blind the Minds of them that believe not*: and Seducers are said to deceive the Hearts of the Simple, and to make Merchandize of weak and unstable Souls. Again,

They take advantage of the Supineness and Negligence of others; 'twas *while Men slept* that *the Enemy sowed his Tares*: and if Satan can lull Men into a carnal and fatal Security, he hath then his Opportunity both of deceiving and destroying them. Moreover,

These evil Instruments work upon the Pride and Ambition of others; for where they find Men big of themselves, and to swell with Vanity and Self-conceit, they sooth and humour them by making them Heads of Parties, and flattering them with vain Conceits of their greater Knowledg and Sanctity; and being thus lifted up, they soon fall into the Snare and Temptation of the Devil. Furthermore,

They

They work upon the Envy, Malice and Ill-nature of others, which are Paſſions truly diabolical, and lead Men into Sedition and Diſſenſion; for when the Fire is once kindled in their own Breaſts, they then diſturb and inflame all that are about them. Once more,

They work upon Mens Avarice and greedy Deſires after worldly Intereſt, drawing them into Sects by the Baits of Profit and Advantage; and ſo by making *Gain their Godlineſs*, ſerve Mammon more than God. In ſhort, St. *James* makes *Wars and Fightings*, Strifes and Diſſenſion, to proceed *from Mens Luſts that war in their Members*, Jam. 4. 1. And St. *Paul* told the *Corinthians*, that *whilſt there were Envyings, Strife and Diviſions among them, they were carnal, and walked as Men*; that is, not like Chriſtians mov'd by the *Holy Spirit of God*, but like Men acted by that *evil Spirit*, that rules in the Hearts of the Children of Diſobedience. By which it appears, that 'tis Satan, the grand Enemy of Chriſt and his Church, that plants theſe Tares in it; that Hereticks and Schiſmaticks are Satan's Tools and Emiſſaries for this purpoſe; who, like the Devil's Husbandmen, ſow the Seeds of Diſcord and Diſſenſion in the Chriſtian Church; and that the Hearts of ignorant, proud, factious and envious Perſons are the Soil prepar'd to receive them.

But what is to be done with theſe Tares? Why, that the Servants ask'd the Houſholder in the next words; *They ſaid unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?* to which he anſwer'd, *Nay, leſt while ye gather up the Tares, ye root up alſo the Wheat with them.* The Hypocrite is not eaſily diſcern'd here from the ſincere Chriſtian; there are thoſe Diſguiſes ofttimes put upon the Face of Error and Vice, that makes them look like Truth and Vertue; and being ſo hardly diſtinguiſh'd, we may hurt the Good, by an unſeaſonable Severity againſt the Bad. *Let both therefore grow together until the Harveſt*, ſaith the Houſholder, *and in the time of Harveſt I will ſay to the Reapers, Gather ye together firſt the Tares, and bind them in Bundles to burn them; but gather the Wheat into my Barns:* meaning, that a time is coming, when Truth ſhall be diſtinguiſh'd from Error, and a Separation made between good Men and bad; and that will be at the End of the World, or the Day of Judgment, when the Angels, who are the Reapers, will be bid to gather the Wheat into the Barn; that is, to tranſlate good Chriſtians into the Joys of Heaven, and burn up the Chaff with unquenchable Fire; that is, to doom evil Men and Seducers to the Miſeries

and

and Torments of Hell. Thus we see the Drift and Design of this Parable: From which we may learn,

1*st*, The infinite Love and tender Care of our Saviour toward his Church, in sowing it with the good Seed of sound Doctrine, Discipline and Devotion: He hath not left it as a neglected Garden or Common, to be over-run with Weeds and Briars, but hath planted it with the choicest Fruit, and hath set able and faithful Workmen in it to manure and cultivate it; so that by receiving the Holy Word and Doctrine deliver'd in it, we may be *built up in our most Holy Faith*, and be *made wise unto Salvation*.

2*dly*, We may learn hence to bring forth Fruit answerable to all this Care and Kindness. The Church of Christ, we see, is sometimes compar'd to a Vineyard, which he hath planted and prun'd with great Diligence; sometimes to a Field, which he hath sown with the best Corn: both which having water'd with the Dews and Blessings of Heaven, he may reasonably look for good Grapes from the one, and good Corn from the other; and that his Pains should be answer'd with a suitable Increase from both: *for who planteth a Vineyard, and eateth not of the Fruits thereof?* and *who soweth, but in hopes of reaping?* What these Fruits are, the Apostle tells us, *Gal.* 5. 22, 23. *Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering*, &c. *If these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall not be barren or unfruitful in the Knowledg of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* Hereby we shall adorn our Profession, and at once answer the End, and obtain the Reward of it; whereas Barrenness and Unfruitfulness under the Means of Grace, is the ready way to lose and be depriv'd of them: for *every Tree that bringeth not forth good Fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the Fire.*

3*dly*, We learn hence the Vigilance of Satan and his Emissaries to disturb and destroy the Church; how they watch all Opportunities, and seek all Advantages to that end: The Enemies are awake to sow their Tares, while others are asleep, who should watch and hinder them; the Vigilance of the one getting ground by the Negligence of the other: which should awaken and stir up the Sons and Lovers of the Church, to be at least as zealously affected in a good Cause, as they are in a bad; lest with the lukewarm Persons in the Church of *Laodicea*, for being neither hot nor cold, we are spu'd out of his Mouth.

4thly, From the Church's having in it both good Seed and bad, and Divine Truths being mingled and blended with many Errors, let us learn to diſcern and diſtinguiſh between the one and the other. Our Saviour hath given us a Mark of Diſtinction to diſcern them by, *By their Fruits ye ſhall know them:* The Doctrines that lead to Peace and Holineſs, are the Gold, Silver, and precious Stone, built upon the Foundation of Chriſtianity, that can abide the Trial, and will obtain a Reward; whereas they that tend to Strife and Diſſenſion, are the Wood, Hay, and Stubble that will be conſum'd at the Laſt Day, and ſuffer Loſs. And having thus try'd all things, let us, in the laſt place, hold faſt that which is good, and that will ſurely bring us to Peace and Happineſs at the laſt; which God grant, *&c.*

DISCOURSE XXXIII.

The EPISTLE for the Sixth Sunday after the *Epiphany.*

1 John iii. 1——9.

Behold, what manner of Love the Father hath beſtow'd upon us, that we ſhould be call'd the Sons of God! Therefore the World knoweth us not, becauſe it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be, &c.

THE Collect for this Day beſeeches God, whoſe bleſſed Son was manifeſted to deſtroy the Works of the Devil, and to make us the Sons of God and Heirs of eternal Life, to grant to us, that having this Hope, we may purify our ſelves, even as he is pure; that when he ſhall appear again with Power and great Glory, we may be like unto him in his eternal and glorious Kingdom. All which Expreſſions and Petitions being taken out of the Epiſtle for this Day, 'twill be requiſite to conſider and explain them in Order. And,

Firſt,

Firſt, The Epiſtle begins with Wonder and Aſtoniſhment at the Greatneſs of the Divine Love, in taking us into the near Relation of Sons or Children; *Behold, what manner of Love the Father hath beſtow'd upon us, that we ſhould be call'd the Sons of God!* The Term *Behold*, prefix'd in the Front, betokens in Scripture ſomething of great Excellency, and likewiſe of great Strangeneſs and Difficulty to come after it, ſuch as is apt to occaſion Wonder, and raiſe Admiration; ſo St. *John* uſher'd our Saviour into the World, with *Ecce! Behold the Lamb of God!* &c. and the Apoſtle here expreſſes the exceeding great Strangeneſs of God's Love towards us, by ſaying, *Behold, what manner of Love is this that the Father hath beſtow'd upon us!* The great Token here inſtanc'd in of this Divine Favour, is our being made or call'd the *Sons of God*, and thereby Heirs of eternal Life; which are not two diſtinct, but one and the ſame Privilege, the latter being a neceſſary Conſequent of the former. Now the wonderful and aſtoniſhing Greatneſs of this Love lies in this, that we who had forfeited all Title to Sonſhip by the firſt Diſobedience, and ſo became the Servants of Sin and Satan, and thereby Heirs of Damnation, ſhould be again reſtor'd to the Privileges of Sons and Children, and ſo intitled to an everlaſting Inheritance; that we who had ſo highly incens'd and provok'd him, ſhould yet be receiv'd into Favour again, and from Aliens and Outcaſts, be taken into the number of his Children: In a word, that the great and infinite Majeſty of Heaven ſhould condeſcend ſo low, as to take the worthleſs and rebellious Sons of *Adam* into ſo near and dear a Relation to himſelf.

But how are we call'd the Sons of God? Why, not by Creation only, for ſo all Creatures, animate and inanimate, may be ſtil'd, as all proceeding from him, but by Adoption and Regeneration. Adoption (you know) is the receiving or engrafting a Stranger into another's Stock or Family, and allowing him all the Favours and Privileges of a natural-born Child. In like manner God Almighty vouchſafes to admit us that were Strangers into his Family, and to call us to the Adoption of Sons. *As many as receiv'd him* (ſaith St. *John*) *to them gave he Power to become the Sons of God, even to as many as believe on his Name*: John 1. 12. By this means, we that *were afar off, Aliens from the Commonwealth of* Iſrael, *and Strangers to the Covenant of Promiſe, are made nigh by the Blood of Chriſt*; and from Enemies and Foreigners, are become *Fellow-Citizens*

with the Saints, and of the Houſhold of God; Eph. 2. 12, 13, 19. And all this not for any Merit, or at any Entreaty of ours, but merely of his own good Will and Pleaſure, having *predeſtinated us to the Adoption of Children by Jeſus Chriſt to himſelf, according to the good pleaſure of his Will*; Eph. 1. 5, 6.

Again, we are the Sons of God by ſpiritual Regeneration; and this is done in our Baptiſm, wherein we are *born again of Water and the Holy Ghoſt*, and thereby from Children of Wrath are made the Children of Grace, and ſo *begotten again to a lively Hope of Glory*. This is in ſhort *the Love of God*, which St. *John* here cannot ſpeak of without Wonder and Amazement, having his Heart warm'd, and his Affections rais'd at the Remembrance of it.

And yet this ineſtimable Love and Privilege beſtow'd upon us by God, cannot ſecure us here from the Hatred and Malice of Men; for St. *John* makes this the very reaſon of their Enmity to and ill Uſage of us: *Therefore* (ſaith he, in the next words) *the World knoweth us not, becauſe it knew him not*; that is, the World doth malign and hate us as a People contrary to them, having other Relations, and other kind of Hopes than they; for they depend wholly upon the World, and we upon God. And this is the Foundation of their Hatred and Contempt of us, for they know us not, becauſe they knew him not; *Marvel not* (ſaith Chriſt) *if the World hate you, for it hated me before it hated you*: And if the only-begotten Son of God was crucify'd by them that knew not what they did, what wonder is it if the adopted Sons of God be perſecuted by them that know not their Relation to him?

However, this will not diminiſh, but rather increaſe our Happineſs; ſo the following words tell us, *Beloved, now are we the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be*; that is, whatever Troubles or Perſecutions we may meet with here, our State and Condition at preſent is that of the Sons and Children of God, which may aſſure us of his Care and Protection. But what we ſhall be hereafter, or what that Inheritance is that ſhall be hereafter ſettled upon us as Sons of God, is not yet fully reveal'd, and cannot at preſent be fully comprehended by us; *but we know that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is*: that is, this we may be aſſur'd of, that when that bleſſed time of his Appearance ſhall come, we, as Sons of God, ſhall reſemble our heavenly Father, as

Children

Children are wont to reſemble the Face and Features of their Parents: We ſhall be like him in Grace and Holineſs, and like him in Glory and Happineſs; and this will conſiſt in ſuch a full and tranſporting ſight of him, as will tranſform us into the ſame Image from Glory to Glory: for *we ſhall ſee him as he is, and ſhall know him even as we are known.*

But what Effect hath the Expectation of theſe things upon us? Why, that the next words will declare, *And every Man that hath this Hope in him, purifieth himſelf, even as he is pure.* Where we are to conſider the Nature and Effect of a Chriſtian's Hope, together with the Pattern or Platform by which it is to act. As for the Nature of a Chriſtian's Hope, that, as appears by what goes before, may be defin'd to be a comfortable and well-grounded Expectation of future Bliſs and Glory. I ſtile it,

1*ſt*, An Expectation, for that is always included in Hope, and evermore goes before Fruition. That which we have, or are poſſeſs'd of, is not the Object of Hope, but Enjoyment; for *Hope that is ſeen* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *is not Hope; for what a Man ſeeth, why doth he yet hope for? but if we hope for that we ſee not, then do we with Patience wait for it:* Rom. 8. 24, 25.

2*ly*, I ſtile it a comfortable Expectation, in oppoſition to that fearful Expectation of Wrath mention'd by the Apoſtle, *Heb.* 10. 27. Hope is attended with ſome kind of Comfort and Delight, and is therefore always fix'd upon ſomething that is either really or apparently good; for that which is apprehended as evil or hurtful, evermore creates Fear, and not Hope: and therefore I ſtile it,

3*ly*, A well-grounded Expectation; for Hope that is not well-grounded is not Hope, but Preſumption, and evermore endeth in Diſappointment and Deſpair. Now the Grounds of a Chriſtian's Hope are founded upon the Promiſes of God, and performing the Conditions annex'd to them, by obſerving whereof our Hope hath a good bottom to rely upon, but without it none.

Laſtly, I ſtile it an Expectation of future Bliſs and Glory. Hope always ſuppoſes the Abſence of the thing hop'd for, and the Object of it is ſtill ſomething that is future; for things preſent and in poſſeſſion, are (as was before obſerv'd) the Objects of Joy and Enjoyment, not of Hope, which is always carry'd out in longing Deſires after things abſent and to come. And the greater the things we deſire

and look for are, the better muſt the Hope and Expectation of them be; and conſequently our Expectation being of future Bliſs and Glory, conſiſting in the Viſion and Enjoyment of God, which Chriſt hath promis'd to all his faithful Followers, the Chriſtian's Hope is founded on the beſt Grounds, and fix'd on the higheſt and nobleſt Objects. This is briefly the Nature and Object of a Chriſtian Hope.

But what Effect hath it upon good Chriſtians? Why, *Every one that hath this Hope purifieth himſelf*; that is, it ſets them upon qualifying themſelves by Purity of Heart and Life for the Bleſſedneſs they hope for. To purify ſuppoſes Pollution, and ſignifies the cleanſing or waſhing it away; 'tis a figurative Expreſſion taken chiefly from the Goldſmith or Refiner, who by melting Silver or other Metal in the Fire, purifies and refines it from all its Droſs. To this the Pſalmiſt alludes, in ſaying, *The Words of the Lord are pure Words, even as the Silver which in the Furnace is tried and purified ſeven times in the Fire*; Pſal. 12. 6. Hence he promis'd the Houſe of *Iſrael*, to *purge away their Droſs, and to take away all their Tin*; Iſa. 1. 25. that is, to refine them from the Dregs of corrupt Nature, and to take away the Guilt and Stain of all their Impurities. The Prophet *Malachi* foretold of the Meſſias, that he ſhould *come as the Refiners Fire and as Fullers Soap, to purify the Sons of* Levi, *and to purge them as Gold and Silver, to offer to the Lord a Sacrifice in Righteouſneſs*; Mal. 3. 2, 3. Accordingly, Chriſt is ſaid to give himſelf to redeem us from all Iniquity, and *to purify to himſelf a peculiar People, zealous of good Works*; Tit. 2. 14. And here the Hope that a Chriſtian hath in him, is ſaid to put him upon purifying himſelf; that is, the purging away the Corruption of his Nature, and advancing it as far as he can to the higheſt pitch of Purity and Perfection.

Now to purify himſelf, here implies the Purity both of Heart and Life. The former conſiſts in the Singleneſs and Sincerity of the Heart, in the Purity and Simplicity of the Intention, without any mixture of Guile or Hypocriſy, Fraud or Double-dealing; doing all things with an honeſt and upright Mind, free from all evil and corrupt Deſigns. To this we are call'd by St. *James*, Chap. 4. 8. *Cleanſe your hands, ye Sinners; and purify your Hearts, ye Double-minded.* And they that do ſo, are by our Saviour pronounc'd bleſſed, *Mat.* 5. 8. *Bleſſed are the pure in Heart, for they ſhall ſee God.*

The

The latter, *viz.* Purity of Life, conſiſts in the Innocence of our Behaviour, or the Integrity of our Words and Actions, abſtaining from all the Impurities of ſenſual Luſts, and *poſſeſſing our Veſſels in Sanctification and Honour, not in the Luſts of Concupiſcence, like the* Gentiles *that know not God.* To this a Chriſtian's Hope of everlaſting Life ſtrongly obliges, as appears by that of the Apoſtle, *2 Cor.* 7. 1. *Having theſe Promiſes, dearly beloved, let us cleanſe our ſelves from all Filthineſs of Fleſh and Spirit, perfecting Holineſs in the Fear of God.* Being receiv'd by Chriſt as Children in his Family, and looking for an Inheritance immortal, undefiled, reſerv'd in Heaven for us; we are now to purify our ſelves from the Pollutions of the Fleſh, and to keep our ſelves unſpotted from the World. But,

What Influence hath this Hope upon Mens purifying themſelves? Why, it hath a double Influence, the one of Congruity, the other of Neceſſity. As for that of Congruity, nothing can be more fit and decent than that they who expect ſuch great things, ſhould qualify themſelves for them, and ſuit their Lives and Actions accordingly. We are the Children of God already, and we know not what higher things are kept in ſtore for us; and what can be more proper and becoming, than to imitate our heavenly Father, and to fit our ſelves for his Favour? All that we know of our future Happineſs, is, that *we ſhall be like God, and ſhall ſee him as he is:* and is it not highly reaſonable and decent, that we ſeek to repair that Image of God in us, into which we hope to be transform'd; and to elevate and prepare the Eyes of our Soul for ſuch a glorious and beatifick Viſion? This is the proper and natural Effect of ſuch a comfortable Expectation; and it muſt be very indecent and improper for any that hath theſe Hopes to do otherwiſe. This is intimated in that Advice of the Apoſtle, *Finally, Brethren, whatſoever things are pure, whatſoever things are honeſt and of good report; if there be any Vertue, if there be any Praiſe, think on theſe things.*

But beſide the Congruity and Decency of the thing, there is alſo an abſolute Neceſſity of it, in order to the attaining the things hoped for; for *without Holineſs no Man can or ſhall ſee the Lord.* 'Tis only the *pure in Heart* that are capable of *ſeeing God:* He is of purer eyes than to behold Iniquity, or to be beheld by it; and therefore our Eyes muſt be clarify'd and prepar'd for ſuch a Sight, before it can behold that Mirror of Purity and Perfection. Hea-

ven is the Region of pure and undefiled Light, where no Pollution or Defilement enters; and therefore 'tis impoſſible for a wicked Man to arrive or abide there, or if he could, without purifying and changing his Nature, Heaven would be rather a Torment than a Happineſs to him: for how can they be happy in the ſight of God, whom they never loved, and whoſe Fear they always caſt from before their eyes? What Happineſs can the Worldling find in Heaven, where all the things he ever loved or ſought after, will be for ever remov'd from him; and inſtead of them, will be entertain'd only with Goods, which he neither underſtands nor values? What pleaſure can the voluptuous Perſon take in Heaven, where all the ſenſual Delights that ever pleas'd him will be at an end; and inſtead of them, he will find there no other Pleaſures, but ſuch of which he hath no reliſh or deſire? How can the ambitious and vain-glorious Man be happy in Heaven, when all the Honours he ever courted are laid in the duſt, and where no other Glories remain, but ſuch to which his Averſion is much greater than his Ambition? By all which it appears, that every one that hath this truly Chriſtian Hope, muſt and will purify himſelf to be qualify'd to receive it.

But by what Pattern or Platform are they to purify themſelves? Why, 'tis *even as he is pure*; that is, to be holy as he that hath call'd us is holy, to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, and to walk even as Chriſt walk'd: not that we are to come up to the ſame degrees of Purity and Perfection with him, or to keep pace with him in the untraceable Steps of his exalted Holineſs; but to become as like him, and to follow him as near as we can. Thus every one that hopes to be like him in Glory, muſt be like him in Grrace here; and to ſee him as he is, we muſt be as he is, endeavouring to conform our ſelves to his Image, and to purify our ſelves by the Example of his Purity.

This the Apoſtle goes on to confirm in the following Verſes, from the Nature of Sin, and its Contrariety to the Law and Will of God; for *whoſoever committeth Sin* (ſaith he) *tranſgreſſeth alſo the Law, for Sin is the Tranſgreſſion of the Law*, and conſequently directly oppoſite to that bliſsful State of Happineſs we hope for, which is a pure and ſinleſs State, and ſo inconſiſtent with the Love and deliberate Commiſſion of any Sin. *And ye know* (as he goes on) *that Chriſt was manifeſted to take away our Sins; and in him is no*

Sin:

Sin: meaning, that our bleſſed Saviour, who was free from all Sin, came into the World to take away our Sins, by ſhedding his Blood to purge out our Corruption, and by ſhedding abroad his Grace into our Hearts to purify our Nature, and thereby fit us for this future State of Bliſs and Purity. *Whoſoever therefore abideth in him* (ſaith he) *ſinneth not*: he that is united to him by a ſound Faith and lively Hope, does not wilfully or deliberately ſin againſt him, much leſs does he give himſelf over to it, or take any pleaſure or delight in it. For *whoſoever* thus wilfully *ſinneth, hath not ſeen him, neither known him*; that is, he is not capable of ſeeing God, or of ever attaining any ſaving Knowledg of him.

From hence the Apoſtle proceeds to caution weaker Chriſtians againſt being impos'd upon by falſe Teachers, and to labour for a right Underſtanding in theſe matters: *Little Children* (ſaith he) *let no Man deceive you, he that doth Righteouſneſs is righteous, even as as he is righteous.* He that acts righteouſly, according to the Precept and Example ſet before him, will alone appear righteous before God. 'Tis not a ſpecious Show, or a good Meaning only, that will do us any Service, but the doing Acts of Righteouſneſs and Good Works that will recommend us to God, and be rewarded by him. He that committeth Sin willingly and deliberately, *is of the Devil*; for the Devil ſinneth from the beginning. Such a one is ſo far from being a Child of God, or in the number of his Sons, that he is of his Father the Devil, who was a Lyar from the beginning, and the Father of them. *And for this purpoſe the Son of God was manifeſted, that he might deſtroy the Works of the Devil.* The End of Chriſt's coming was to root out all Sin and Wickedneſs; ſuch as Pride, Lying, Slandering, Backbiting, Tale-bearing, with all drawing and enticing any to Sin, which are more eſpecially the Works of the Devil, and render Men moſt like unto him; as alſo to plant all kinds of Vertue and Holineſs, which make us like unto God, and fit us for the Viſion and Enjoyment of him.

This is briefly the Senſe and Sum of this Day's Epiſtle; which may teach us,

1*ſt*, To admire and adore the infinite Love and Goodneſs of God in making us his Sons, and taking us into ſo near and dear a Relation to himſelf. This St. *John* here could not ſpeak of without Extaſy and Amazement; *Behold! what*

what manner of Love is this, what unparallel'd, what unſpeakable, what undeſerv'd Love is this, *that we ſhould be call'd the Sons of God!* And St. *Paul* elſewhere like one in a Rapture cries out, *O the Height and Depth, and Length and Breadth of this Love of God, that paſſeth Knowledg!* Eph. 3. 18.

2*dly*, Let the Apprehenſion hereof beget in us a lively Hope of the far greater Bliſs and Happineſs that will follow after it; for we cannot now take the full dimenſions of this great Privilege, nor know the bottom or farther end of it. At preſent let us fill our Minds with well-grounded Hopes, and reſt aſſured of the full and ſpeedy Accompliſhment of them.

3*dly*, Let this Hope teach us to purify our ſelves, even as he is pure, that we may be meet to be receiv'd into the undefiled Regions: let us endeavour to be like God, that we may be fit to enjoy him; for we may as well hope to ſee without Light, as to behold the Face of God without Holineſs. 'Tis Grace only that qualifies for Glory, and Purity for Perfection. To attain which, let us,

4*thly*, Beware of committing any wilful and deliberate Sin, againſt the Light of God's Laws, and the Dictates of our own Conſcience; for that will forfeit this high Privilege, and make us the Children of the Devil, and not the Sons of God.

Laſtly, Let us abandon all the Works of the Devil, which Chriſt came to deſtroy; and pray for all thoſe Fruits of the Spirit that he came to plant in us: ſo ſhall we that are now Sons be made meet Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light; which God grant, *&c.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE XXXIV.

The GOSPEL for the Sixth Sunday after the *Epiphany.*

St. Matthew xxiv. 23——31.

Then if any Man ſhall ſay unto you, Lo! here is Chriſt, or there, believe it not: for there ſhall ariſe falſe Chriſts and falſe Prophets, and ſhall ſhew great Signs and Wonders; inſomuch that (if it were poſſible) they ſhall deceive the very Elect. Behold! I have told you before, &c.

THE Collect and Epiſtle for this Day mind us of the two great Ends of Chriſt's Manifeſtation in the Fleſh, *viz.* the deſtroying the Works of the Devil, and the making us the Sons of God. Of both which before.

The Goſpel for the Day (which is now to be handled) warns us againſt falſe Chriſts, who come on other and contrary Ends, *viz.* The making us Slaves to Satan, and to the doing of his Works.

The Goſpel begins with a Caution againſt theſe Impoſtors, in theſe words; *Then if any Man ſhall ſay, Lo! here is Chriſt, or there, believe it not. Then* refers to the Times before-mention'd, to wit, the laſt Days, the Time of the Meſſias, which will be Times of great Trouble and Diſtreſs; *Nation riſing againſt Nation, and Kingdom againſt Kingdom; and there ſhall be Famines, and Peſtilences, and Earthquakes in divers places.* Then is the time for Deceivers and Impoſtors to appear, who by working upon the Fears and Fancies of People in diſtreſs, promiſing them Deliverance, and doing great things for them, eaſily beguile and ſerve their own ends upon them. And therefore *if any Man ſay unto you, Lo! here is Chriſt*; that is, if any would perſuade you in the time of your Trouble, that here

is

is the Meſſias, or he that ſhall deliver or bring you out of your Diſtreſs, be not too credulous, nor give any heed to them. The words ſuppoſe, that there will be great Divi-ſions and Diſtractions in mens Minds about the Perſon and the Place of the Meſſiah; ſome ſaying, This is he that ſhould come for the Redemption of *Iſrael*; others ſaying, Nay, but this is he that was promis'd and foretold by the Prophets for that end. And as they were divided about the Perſon, ſo were they about the Place too where he ſhould appear; one ſaying, *Lo! here is Chriſt*; and ano-ther, *there:* ſome aſſigning *Bethlehem* of *Judea* for the Place of his Appearance; others ſaying, nay, *that is the leaſt among the Hundreds of* Judah, and ſo too mean a place for the Son of God. Some again aſſign *Nazareth* in *Galilee*, but others ſaid, *Can any Good come out of* Nazareth? Thus were Men divided of old concerning the Perſon and Place of the Meſſiah, which hath made ſome ſince wholly to reject him, and others to fall into wild and different Opinions about him: which occaſion'd this Caution in the Text, *If any ſay, Lo! here is Chriſt, or there, believe it not:* that is, do not hearken to them, or aſſent to the Truth of what they ſay, but rather turn the deaf ear to their Doctrine, and be not eaſily drawn into the Belief of it. St. *John* gives the ſame Advice, ſaying, *Beloved, believe not every Spirit*, 1 John 4. 1. Give no heed to them, and much leſs yield up your Faith and Reaſon to them.

The Reaſon whereof is here added in the next words; *For there ſhall ariſe falſe Chriſts and falſe Prophets.* And St. *John* tells us, that *many falſe Prophets are already gone out into the World.* So that we are here warn'd againſt two ſorts of Deceivers, *viz. falſe Chriſts and falſe Prophets.* The *falſe Chriſts* were thoſe, who took upon them to be the Saviours of the World, or the Perſons foretold by the Prophets, that ſhould come for that purpoſe. Of theſe our Saviour himſelf gave notice, in the fifth Verſe of this Chapter, ſaying, *Many ſhall come in my Name, ſaying, I am Chriſt, and ſhall deceive many.* Not as tho they preten-ded to be ſent by Chriſt, for ſo coming in his Name ſome-times ſignifies; but that they would of their own accord aſſume to themſelves the Dignity and Authority of the true Meſſias. Of this ſort there aroſe many among the *Jews*; as *Theudas*, and *Judas* of *Galilee*, of whom we read in the Acts of the Apoſtles, *Chap.* 5. 36, 37. who drew many Diſciples after them, and occaſion'd their Deſtruction.

Such likewise were *Jonathas*, *Barchochebas*, and many others, who arrogated to themselves the Honour of Christ, and pretended to come for the Redemption of Mankind.

There was about the tenth Century a certain *Jew*, call'd *El-David*, who gave out that he was Christ, and drew a great many Proselytes after him, most of whom came to untimely ends. And of late years we have had one *Hacket*, and *Naylor*, both pretending to come from God for the Salvation of Men, till the Discovery of the Cheat expos'd them to condign Punishment.

But beside *false Christs*, here is, *2dly*, mention made of *false Prophets*. And these were Persons pretending much to Inspirations, and that they had more and clearer Revelations of the Mind of God made to them, than to other Men. They were stiled sometimes *false Apostles, deceitful Workers, transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ*; 2 Cor. 11. 13. Sometimes they are call'd by the Name of *false Teachers*, who *by good Words and fair Speeches deceive the Hearts of the Simple*; corrupting the Simplicity of the Gospel, and instilling into mens Minds the Poison of Heresies, Errors, and Divisions. And of this sort of false Prophets too many are gone abroad into the World. In short, when *David George* in *Holland*, and *John* of *Leyden* in *Munster*, and other pretended Prophets in *Germany*, deceiv'd so many beyond the Seas; and when the Enthusiasms of Presbyterians, Anabaptists, Quakers, and other Sectaries, who pretend to pray and preach by the Spirit, have deluded so many in our own Country; 'tis time to hearken to our Saviour's Advice, *Believe them not*, and *go not after them*.

Which Counsel is the more to be heeded, because 'tis here added of the *false Christs* and *false Prophets*, that they *shall shew great Signs and Wonders, insomuch that (if it were possible) they shall deceive the very Elect*. Satan, to uphold his Kingdom, labour'd to vie Miracles with Christ and his Apostles, whose Designs were to overthrow it; and his Agents, by their Illusions and lying Wonders, seek to take off the Force of all the mighty Works by which the Kingdom of Christ stands confirm'd. The Magicians of old sought to imitate the Miracles of *Moses*, till they saw the Finger of God to outdo and elude all their Enchantments: And Impostors have since try'd the same methods, till they have been forc'd to see and acknowledg their own Impotence.

We

We read of *Simon Magus*, that he boaſted himſelf to be ſome *Great one*, even a Divine Perſon; and by his Signs and Sorceries bewitch'd many into a Belief, that he was the *great Power of God*, till overcome by the much greater Miracles of *Philip*, he *believ'd* in Chriſt, and pray'd *Peter* to *pray for him*, Acts 8. 9, 10, 11, 24. After him appear'd *Apollonius Tyaneus*, who by the help of Magick and other Sleights did ſuch ſtrange and wonderful things, as ſtagger'd the Faith of many concerning the Miracles of Chriſt and his Apoſtles. In ſhort, we read of the Coming of Antichriſt, that 'tis *with all Power, and Signs, and lying Wonders*; and that *the working of Satan*, in falſe Teachers, would be *with all Deceivableneſs of Unrighteouſneſs: inſomuch* (as our Saviour here tells us) *that if it were poſſible, they would deceive the very Elect*. The Deluſions of Impoſtors would be ſo ſtrong and powerful, as to ſeduce even the ſelect and ſincere People of God, and to ſhake the Conſtancy of the firmeſt Chriſtians, if it were poſſible for any Deceit to work upon them: but theſe our Saviour *keeps by Faith unto Salvation*, and tho Satan deſires to *ſift or winnow them as Wheat*, yet *Chriſt hath pray'd that their Faith fail not*. But as for thoſe that are more liable to be *remov'd from him that called them into the Grace of Chriſt*, theſe like the Reed are ſhaken with every wind of Doctrine, and eaſily fall from their own Stedfaſtneſs; as we find many after did, who were drawn into many Errors and Hereſies, and *carry'd about with divers and ſtrange Doctrines*. Theſe things Chriſt foretold to his Diſciples; *Behold* (ſaith he) *I have told you before:* all things being preſent to him, who *was, is, and is to come*. And this warning he the rather gave them to prevent Surprize, that they ſhould not be ſtartled or ſhaken when they ſaw it come to paſs; but being forewarn'd, they might be forearm'd, and happily ſecur'd againſt the Danger of falſe Chriſts, and the Poiſon of falſe Prophets.

Having given this general Caution againſt all ſorts of Deceivers, he proceeds to apply it by ſome particular Inferences drawn from it; ſaying in the next words, *Wherefore, if they ſhall ſay unto you, Behold he is in the Deſart! go not forth; Behold he is in the ſecret Chambers! believe it not*. If any ſhall bring you the News, that a Deliverer is come in ſuch a deſart Place, as *Simon Magus* was ſaid to have gather'd many thouſands together in the Wilderneſs of *Judea*, do not hearken ſo far to ſuch Rumours, as to go after them; or if others ſhall ſay, he is in the ſecret Chambers

or

or Meetings of ſome deſigning Perſons, believe them not, and be not deceiv'd with ſuch Fallacies. In like manner, if any ſhall ſay, Behold, he is in the Conclave of Catholicks, or in the Conventicles of Sectaries! be not miſled by either, nor follow ſuch vain Pretenders.

For as the Lightning cometh out of the Eaſt, and ſhineth even unto the Weſt, ſo ſhall alſo the Coming of the Son of Man be: that is, as the Lightning cometh ſuddenly, and flaſhes from the Eaſt even unto the Weſt, its Influence extending to the remoteſt Places; ſo will Chriſt come ſhortly to diſcover himſelf to all the Ends of the Earth: and as the Lightning pierces into the moſt ſecret Corners, ſo will the Son of Man ſearch out the hidden Intrigues of Impoſtors, and bring to light the ſecret Counſels and Devices of the Heart. There will be no need then to look for him in deſart or ſecret Places, ſaying, *Lo! here is Chriſt, or lo! there:* for he will become viſible and conſpicuous to all, to the joy of good Men, and to the terrour of the Bad. But before this great and terrible Day, there will come a ſad and ſudden Deſtruction upon *Jeruſalem*, and a great Slaughter among the *Jews*, which like Lightning would fly from one Corner to another, and deſtroy in every Place; and this Slaughter would be made by the *Roman* Army, which would come and take away both their City and Nation.

For *whereſoever the Carcaſe is, there will the Eagles be gather'd together.* For the better underſtanding of this difficult Place, and the Connexion of it with the foregoing, 'twill be requiſite to note, that the Eagle was the Enſign in the Banners of the *Roman* Army, of which they had two in every Legion: for which reaſon, the *Roman* Eagle is ſometimes ſet to expreſs the whole Army. Now 'tis the known Property of the Eagle, to attend Battles, to ſmell out Carcaſes, and to feed on the Slain; according to that of *Job*, Chap. 39. 29, 30. *The Eagle ſeeketh the Prey, and her Eyes behold afar off; her Young-ones alſo ſuck up Blood, and where the Slain are, there is ſhe.* The Reſemblance then here made uſe of, conſiſts in this, that as the Eagles or Vultures find out the Carcaſe, whereſoever it is; ſo ſhall the *Roman* Armies find out the *Jews*, and make a Prey or Slaughter of them: which was the thing ſpoken of in the foregoing Verſe, *viz.* that this Judgment ſhould befal the *Jews*, whereſoever they were. And to this ſome refer that Prophecy of *Moſes* ſo long before, *Deut.* 28. 49. *The Lord ſhall bring a Nation againſt thee from far, from the Ends of*

the

the Earth, as ſwift as the Eagle flieth, a Nation whoſe Tongue thou ſhalt not underſtand. To the ſame purpoſe is that of *Hoſea*, Chap. 8. 1. *He ſhall come as an Eagle againſt the Houſe of the Lord.* Both which Prophecies are apply'd to this final Deſtruction of the *Jews* by the *Roman* Eagles; which were gather'd againſt them at any Diſtance where-ever they were.

Now this Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* is here and elſewhere made the Preſage or Forerunner of the laſt Judgement: ſo the next words import; *Immediately after the Tribulation of thoſe Days, ſhall the Sun be darken'd, and the Moon ſhall not give her Light, and the Stars ſhall fall from Heaven, and the Powers of the Heavens ſhall be ſhaken.* Where *immediately after* muſt not be underſtood preſently, as if the Day of Judgment were to follow immediately upon it; but 'tis meant of ſome ſhort time after, according to that of St. *Peter*, that *one Day with the Lord is as a thouſand Years, and a thouſand Years as one Day.* And therefore we muſt not reckon the *Lord ſlack concerning his Promiſe*, or ſlow in his Coming, becauſe he doth not come preſently; for the Day of *the Lord will come as a Thief in the Night*, 2 Pet. 3. 8, 9, *&c.* I know ſome underſtand the darkning of the Sun and Moon here, and the falling of the Stars, in a figurative Senſe, as relating only to the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*; making the Darkning of the Sun to refer to the Ruin of the Temple, and extinguiſhing the Light thereof; the Moon's not giving her Light, to the Deſtruction of the City; the falling of the Stars, to the Overthrow of the leſſer Cities about it; and the ſhaking of the Powers of Heaven, to the ſhaking its Government both Civil and Eccleſiaſtical. But this being a ſtrain'd Interpretation, others more probably underſtand theſe in a literal ſenſe, as the Signs and Forerunners of the great Day of Judgment. So that parallel Place in St. *Luke*, Chap. 21. 25, 26. is generally underſtood; which being the Goſpel for the ſecond Sunday in *Advent*, the Particulars are there more largely explain'd, and thither I refer the Reader,

And proceed to what follows; where 'tis ſaid, that *then ſhall appear the Sign of the Son of Man in Heaven; and then ſhall all the Tribes of the Earth mourn, and they ſhall ſee the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven, with Power and great Glory.* What this Sign of the Son of Man in Heaven is, hath been likewiſe variouſly interpreted; ſome would have it to be a ſpecial Prodigy or Comet in the Heavens, which in the form

of

of a fiery Sword hung over *Jerusalem*, pointing to and portending the Destruction of the City, which the Tribes of the Earth beheld with great Sorrow and Sadness: St. *Luke* expresses it by *Mens Hearts failing them for fear of what was coming upon the Earth*; and St. *John*, by *all the Kindreds of the Earth wailing because of him.* But these things going before the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, cannot be this *Sign of the Son of Man*, which relates to something that follow'd after it. And therefore others with greater reason understand it, of some prodigious Changes and Convulsions in the Heavens, presaging the Son of Man's Coming to Judgment: for so the next words declare; *And they shall see the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven, with Power and great Glory.* Which relate to his coming at the last and great Day, when he shall make the Clouds his Chariot, and come flying upon the Wings of the Wind, attended with all the Powers of Heaven, that is, an innumerable Train of Angels, and appearing in the greatest Splendour and Glory. All which is confirm'd by the following words; *And he shall send his Angels with a great Sound of a Trumpet, and they shall gather together his Elect, from the four Winds, from one end of Heaven to the other.* Which is a brief Description of the Manner of his summoning all the Inhabitants of the Earth to appear before him: the Angels shall be sent, as Heralds to proclaim his Coming, and with the loud Sound of a Trumpet shall gather his Elect, and all others, from all the Quarters of the Heavens, to come, hear, and receive their Doom.

This is, in short, a full Account of the Gospel for this Day; from which we may learn several good and useful Lessons. As,

1st, From the Warning here given against false Christs and false Prophets, we may learn to take the good Advice here and elsewhere given us, *Not to believe every Spirit*, but to *beware of false Prophets* and *false Teachers, many whereof are gone abroad into the World.* And the rather, because they go about *in Sheeps clothing*; that is, with soft and smooth Pretences, thereby seeking to divide the Flock of Christ, that they may the more easily deceive and devour them. To prevent the being impos'd upon by them, St. *John* directs *to try the Spirits, whether they be of God*, 1 John 4. 1. that is, to bring the Doctrine and Principles of all such Pretenders to the Test of the holy Scriptures, the only infalli-

infallible Standard and Meaſure of Divine Truths. *To the Law and to the Teſtimony* (ſaith the Prophet *Iſaiah*) *if they ſpeak not according to this Word, it is becauſe there is no Light in them*; Iſa. 8. 20. I know ſome would try Doctrines by the Light within them; and others, by the outward Shows and Appearances of Sanctity in the Embracers of them. But both theſe are falſe Rules, and miſlead many into great Errors and Diviſions. But the Word of God is an unerring Rule, *to which we ſhall do well to take heed, as to a Light ſhining in a dark Place.* But becauſe all Sects quote Scripture for their Errors, and pretend to have the Word of God on their ſide, we muſt remember what St. *Peter* tells us, that *no Scripture is of any private Interpretation*, 2 Pet. 1. 20. If any ſhall take upon them to expound Scripture, without any Office, Parts, or Call thereunto, 'tis no wonder if they miſtake Error for Truth, and put Darkneſs for Light: If he that hath weak or bad Eyes will refuſe or reject a Guide, 'tis no ſtrange thing if he ſtumble or fall. The ſame Apoſtle tells us, that *the unlearned and unſtable wreſt the Scriptures to their own Deſtruction*; 2 Pet. 3. 16. And therefore they are to receive the Inſtructions of thoſe that are appointed to teach them: 'tis the Prieſts Lips that preſerve Knowledg, and the People are to ſeek the Law at their Mouth. And if theſe at any time differ among themſelves, they are to be determin'd by the Wiſdom and Authority of the Church, which St. *Paul* ſtiles, *The Pillar and Ground of Truth*, 1 Tim. 3. 15. There we are to acquieſce and ſubmit, having no higher or farther Means upon Earth to have recourſe to.

2dly, From the ſad Fate of *Jeruſalem*, by the Deſtruction both of the City and Temple, we may learn to avoid thoſe heinous and provoking Sins that occaſion'd it: God Almighty is not wont to ſend ſuch waſting Calamities for nothing; nor does he willingly afflict the Children of Men; he is ſlow to Wrath, and ready to forgive; neither doth he preſently ſuffer his whole Diſpleaſure to ariſe: 'tis Mens crying Enormities that ripen them for Vengeance, and draw ſuch heavy Judgments upon their Heads. The Sins of *Jeruſalem* were obſtinate Impenitence and Infidelity, the Abuſe of God's Mercies, and a wilful reſiſting of all the Means of reclaiming them; they would take no Warning, but reſolutely withſtood all the Methods both of Mercy and Juſtice: inſtead of hearkning to God's Meſſengers, they *killed his Prophets, and ſtoned them that were ſent to them.*

them. Which made our Saviour lament the Miſery they had brought upon themſelves, ſaying, *How often would I have gather'd thee, as a Hen gathers her Chicken under her Wings, and ye would not.* And St. *Luke* brings him in *weeping over the City*, and ſaying, *Oh that thou hadſt known in this thy Day, the things that belong'd unto thy Peace! but now they are hid from thine Eyes.* This was the occaſion of their Miſery, and this will be our Fate too, if we walk in the ſame Ways; and *except we repent*, and turn from our Sins unto God, *we ſhall all likewiſe periſh.*

Laſtly, From the Signs and Certainty of an approaching Judgment, let us learn to look and prepare for it; not ſaying with the wicked Servant, *My Lord delays his Coming*, and ſo neglecting all Care and Preparation for him; but let us be always upon our Watch, leſt he come upon us unawares: let us make our Accounts ready, that we may be able to yield them up with Joy, and not with Grief; ſo ſhall we avoid the Doom of ſlothful, and receive the Reward of good and faithful Servants. Which God grant, *&c.*

DISCOURSE XXXV.

The EPISTLE for the Sunday call'd *Septuageſima*, or the Third Sunday before *Lent*.

1 Cor. ix. 24, to the end.

Know ye not, that they which run in a Race, run all, but one receiveth the Prize; ſo run that ye may obtain. And every Man that ſtriveth for the Maſtery, is temperate in all things, &c.

THE reaſon of giving this Sunday the Name of *Septuageſima*, is not *ab ordine numerandi*, as if it were the ſeventieth Day before *Eaſter*, for that is not true; but as a Reverend Father conjectures, *à conſequentia numerandi*: for the Firſt Sunday in *Lent* being call'd *Quadrageſima*, or the fortieth Day from *Eaſter*, therefore the

Sunday before that being ſtill farther from *Eaſter*, is call'd *Quinquageſima*, Five being the next Number above Four; and ſo the Sunday before that *Sexageſima*, and the Sunday before that *Septuageſima*, or the third Sunday before *Lent*, which is this Day. And the ſame Father tells us, that this and the two next Sundays began the Preparation for the great Faſt of *Lent*; that when it came, it might be the more ſtrictly and religiouſly obſerv'd.

And therefore the Collect for the Day beſeeches Almighty God favourably to hear the Prayers of his People, offer'd up at thoſe ſolemn Seaſons, and likewiſe mercifully to deliver them from the juſt Puniſhments of their Sins, to be confeſs'd and lamented at that time.

The Epiſtle for the Day puts us upon the Duties of Penance and Mortification; and to perſuade us thereunto, promiſes a Reward of an everlaſting Crown. The Epiſtle begins, with comparing our Chriſtian Courſe to *a Race*, wherein tho many *run*, yet few *receive the Prize*; and therefore wills us, *ſo to run, that we may obtain it*. Indeed a Chriſtian's Life is in Scripture ſet forth by many Reſemblances of this nature: 'tis ſometimes called

A Walk, which ſignifies a progreſſive and deliberate Motion, or a ſteddy holding on in the Way that we ſhould go. Sometimes,

A Warfare, wherein we are to expect Oppoſition, and count upon Enemies, whom we are to reſiſt and conquer. Again, 'tis ſometimes call'd

A Watch; which puts us ſtill upon our Guard, and requires Vigilance and Circumſpection, that we be not ſurpriz'd or circumvented.

And here 'tis call'd a Race; which betokens a ſwift and nimble Motion, and wills us to run with Patience and Alacrity the Paths of God's Commandments, that we may receive the Reward annex'd to them.

Now we *know* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *that they which run in a Race, run all:* there is a freedom for any to enter upon the Courſe, and none that will are hinder'd from engaging in it. In like manner, the Chriſtian Courſe is free for all, and none are debar'd from entring upon it: The Door of Baptiſm is open to all that will enter by it, and the Church refuſes none that come to it. But yet, as in a Race, tho all run, yet one receives the Prize; he that comes firſt to the Goal wins all, and the reſt are diſappointed of their Hope: So in this Chriſtian Courſe, tho many are call'd to the

outward Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and ſeem to ſet out well in it, yet few receive the Reward that is promis'd to it. Some begin well, but flag and faulter half way, and they loſe the Prize for not holding out to the end. Others finiſh their Courſe, but come not time enough to the Goal; and theſe loſe the Prize for coming too late. Others again, tranſgreſs the Limits, and run not within the Bounds appointed for the Race; and theſe loſe it by their Folly and Extravagance. And therefore the Apoſtle here wills all Men *ſo to run, that they may obtain.* For the better doing whereof, I ſhall clear theſe two things:

Firſt, That there is a Prize, which we are all to run for. And,

Secondly, That we ought all ſo to run, that we may obtain it.

In ſpeaking to which, becauſe the Terms are all Agoniſtical and Metaphorical, alluding to the Races and other Exerciſes us'd in the *Olympick* Games, which were frequent among the *Corinthians*, to whom this Epiſtle was written; 'twill be requiſite a little to explain them, as we go, the better to apply them to our Chriſtian Courſe.

And, *Firſt*, I ſay, there is a Prize, which we are all to run for. This we know is ſomething of Value ſet at the end of the Race, to be given to him that comes foremoſt to it. Thus it was in the *Grecian* Games, to which the Apoſtle here alludes: and thus it is in our Chriſtian Race, where there is a Reward plac'd at the end of it, to which we are all to aſpire to, and make towards. This St. *Paul* calls, *The Mark*, or *the Prize of the High Calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus*; telling us, that he was ſtill *preſſing forward* to attain it, *Phil.* 3. 14. And in his Epiſtle to *Timothy*, he adds, that at *the finiſhing of his Courſe, there was laid up for him a Crown of Righteouſneſs, which God the righteous Judg would give him at that Day; and not to him only, but to all that love his appearing:* 2 Tim. 4. 7, 8. Where there is an Alluſion, not only to the Prize given to the Combatants in the *Olympick* Games; but likewiſe to the Judg appointed to award the Prize to him, to whom of right it belong'd. Now this Prize is there call'd a *Crown of Righteouſneſs*; and elſewhere, *a Crown of Life*; and more frequently, *a Crown of Glory*, and *an exceeding, exceſſive, and eternal Weight of Glory*, 2 Cor. 4. 17. Sometimes, 'tis ſtil'd *a*

Kingdom; and such a one too, as *can never be moved*, Heb. 12. 28. Sometimes, an *Inheritance immortal, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserv'd in Heaven for us*, 1 Pet. 1. 4. This is briefly the Prize which we are all to run for, and in the whole Course of our Lives to direct our Aims and Actions to.

And indeed the Glory and Greatness of it is sufficient to quicken our Desires and Endeavours after it. Earthly Crowns and Kingdoms spur Men on with the greatest Courage, and make them despise all Difficulties that lie in the way to them; but a heavenly Crown or Kingdom should move much more, as infinitely exceeding the other both in Dignity and Duration. The Patriarchs of old, by their unwearied Travels and Pilgrimages, shewed plainly that they sought a Kingdom. And all those Worthies in the 11th to the *Hebrews*, had an Eye to this Recompence of Reward in all that they did or suffer'd: yea, we find *Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, endured the Cross for the Glory that was set before him*, and for that was rewarded with a Crown. And the Apostle would have us look up to him, that we may not faint, but run with Patience the Race that is set before us.

But because all Running will not bring us to the Prize, I must proceed, *Secondly*, To shew the Manner of it, how we may run so as to obtain it. The word *so* refers to the Laws and Rules prescrib'd in the Running of Races, which were then publickly known, and necessary to be observ'd by all that would win the Prize. As,

1*st*, There were certain Bounds or Terms, where they were to begin or set out, and also where they were to stop or end. Again,

2*dly*, There was a white Line that mark'd out the Path, within which they were to run; to which the Apostle alludes, in saying, that he press'd forward towards the Mark, for the Prize of his High Calling.

3*dly*, There was a Judg plac'd at the end of the Race, whose Office it was to adjudg the Prize to be given according to these Rules. To which the same Apostle alludes, in saying, that God, the righteous Judg, should give him a Crown of Righteousness at the last Day. So that they were to run by Line or Rule; and if they transgres's'd either by unfair starting at first, or by coming short, or by running over, they assuredly miss'd the Prize. Now the

Apostle

Apoſtle applies theſe things to our Chriſtian Race, willing us to ſet out well at firſt, to move on regularly after, and to hold out to the end. Which things will help us ſo to run as to obtain: To which end, we muſt,

1. Begin early, and enter betimes upon a Courſe of Vertue and Religion. *Salomon* wills us, to *remember our Creator in the Days of our Youth*, and to *bear the Yoke betimes*. He that begins well, ſets out to great advantage, and will be mightily enabled and encourag'd to hold on: and therefore the ſame Wiſe Man adviſes, to *train up a Child in the Way that he ſhould go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it*.

2. To run ſo as to obtain, we muſt not only begin well, but move on regularly after; keeping within the Rules of God's Commandments, and not getting out of the Lines of our Duty to God or Man. The tranſgreſſing of theſe Bounds, puts us out of the ſafe Paths of Vertue that lead to Life and Salvation, and brings us into the high ways of Sin and Error, that lead to Death and Deſtruction: The former is that ſtrait Gate and narrow Way, mention'd by our Saviour, which few find or enter; the latter is that wide Gate and broad Way, which many paſs and walk in. To run right then, we muſt hearken to that Voice, ſaying, This is the Way, walk in it, without turning to the Right Hand or to the Left, ſo ſhall we find Reſt to our Souls; and by ordering our Converſation aright, we ſhall ſee the Salvation of God.

3. To run ſo as to obtain the Prize, we muſt hold out to the end of the Race; for he that faints or flags by the Way, can never reach to it. *Be faithful unto Death* (ſaith our Saviour) *and I will give thee the Crown of Life*. And the Apoſtle to the ſame purpoſe, *We ſhall certainly reap, if we faint not; for they who by patient continuance in Well-doing, ſeek for Glory, ſhall in the end find Eternal Life*. And therefore the ſame Apoſtle adviſes us, to be *ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord*; and then we ſhall find, that *our Labour will not be in vain in the Lord*.

Theſe are the Rules preſcrib'd for running our Chriſtian Race, that we may receive the Prize ſet at the end of it. In order to which, 'twill be requiſite to add, that we muſt run as ſwiftly, as lightly, and as chearfully as we can.

For the *1ſt*, Nimbleneſs you know is mainly neceſſary in a Race, where he that runs faſteſt, and comes ſooneſt to the Goal, is ſure to win the Prize: Swiftneſs in a Race, like Strength in a Battle, gives the ſureſt hopes of the Re-

ward in both: For tho *Solomon* tells us, *the Race is not always to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong*; yet that is only when God, for ſome Reaſons, thinks fit to interpoſe and hinder: otherwiſe, theſe are the ordinary Means of Succeſs and Victory in both. He that moves on ſlowly and heavily in either, neceſſarily falls ſhort, and ſeldom or never attains his End. And therefore the Pſalmiſt declares, *I made haſte, and delayed not the time to keep thy Commandments*; willing us to run ſwiftly the Paths of his Precepts. St. *James* calls upon us to *be ſwift to hear*, and ready to receive God's Word, and to move on nimbly in his Ways. To this end,

2*dly*, We muſt run as lightly as we can; that is, as free from all Clogs and Encumbrances of Sin and the World, as is poſſible; for theſe hinder both the Swiftneſs and the Succeſs of our Motion: And therefore we find the antient Racers were wont to put off their Clothes, and ſtrip themſelves of all Encumbrances that might retard their Motion. To this the Apoſtle alludes, *Heb.* 12. 1. *Being compaſs'd about with ſo great a Cloud of Witneſſes, let us lay aſide every Weight, and the Sin that doth ſo eaſily beſet us, and run with Patience the Race that is ſet before us.* Where we are bid to imitate our Forerunners in the Faith, who laid aſide every Weight that might clog their Activity, and made themſelves as light as they could, the better to facilitate and quicken their Motion: By whoſe Example, we are to caſt off all Burdens of worldly Cares, Affections, and Deſires, that may hinder our flight to Heaven; but eſpecially, we muſt rid our Hearts of all love of Vice and Wickedneſs, and of that Sin particularly, to which we are moſt inclin'd, and is moſt apt to prevail upon us; call'd, *the Sin that doth ſo eaſily beſet us*; becauſe 'tis ſtill hanging about us, and either ſtops or turns us out of our way: Theſe we are to lay aſide, that we may run the more lightly and nimbly in our Chriſtian Race.

Again, 3*dly*, To run ſo as to obtain, we muſt move on chearfully in it, ſaying, with the Pſalmiſt, *I delight to do thy Will, O God; yea, thy Law is within my Heart.* Sad and dejected Spirits will dull our Motion, and not ſuffer us to run faſt enough to get the Prize; 'tis the lively and chearful Heart that quickens our Pace, and procures for us the promis'd Reward: and therefore St. *Paul* wills us, to *rejoice in the Lord always*; and leſt our Spirits ſhould ſink, repeats it, *And again, I ſay, rejoice.* A lively and light-

ſom

ſom Spirit will help us to go on and finiſh our Courſe with Joy, and make us rejoice as a Giant to run our Courſe; which will be the beſt means to help us to perſevere and hold out to the End, and that will ſurely entitle and bring us to the Prize.

But beſide this Metaphor of a Race, which we have inſiſted on, the Apoſtle, in the following part of the Epiſtle, compares a Chriſtian Life to thoſe other Exerciſes of Wreſtling, Fighting, Fencing, Leaping, and the like, which were us'd among the *Corinthians* in the *Olympick* Games: and they that undertook or engag'd in them, are here ſaid to *ſtrive for the Maſtery*; which was the End of all that entet'd the Circle or Amphitheater in thoſe Sports.

Now to theſe the Holy Scriptures frequently allude, in deſcribing our Chriſtian Courſe. In alluſion to their Wreſtlings, we are ſaid to *wreſtle not with Fleſh and Blood, but againſt Principalities and Powers, againſt the Rulers of the Darkneſs of this World, and againſt ſpiritual Wickedneſſes in High Places*; Epheſ. 6. 12. And elſewhere, we wreſtle with our Adverſary the Devil, and againſt the Power and Force of all his Temptations.

In alluſion to their Fightings, we are bid *to fight the good Fight of Faith*, and to ſtruggle with all the Allurements of the World.

In alluſion to their Fencings, we are exhorted to *wield the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God*; to *put on the whole Armour of God, that we may be able to ſtand againſt the Wiles of the Devil*; *having our Loins girt with Truth, and having on the Breaſt-Plate of Righteouſneſs: taking to our ſelves the Shield of Faith, and the Helmet of Salvation*, to defend us againſt all the Aſſaults of our Enemies.

Laſtly, In alluſion to their Leaping, we are ſaid to leap for Joy, in ſinging and praiſing God. All which Expreſſions relate to thoſe known Exerciſes and Games that were us'd among them.

Now in theſe Exerciſes, wherein Men ſtrove to excel and to get the Maſtery, there were certain Rules to be obſerv'd; partly to fit them for them, and partly to obtain the Reward annex'd to them, the obſerving whereof is by St. *Paul* ſtil'd, *the ſtriving lawfully*; telling us in 2 *Tim.* 2. 5. that *if a Man ſtrive for Maſteries, yet he is not crown'd except he ſtrive lawfully*; that is, unleſs he keep to the Laws and Rules preſcrib'd in thoſe Exerciſes.

One

One of these Rules we have in the Verse immediately foregoing; *No Man that warreth, entangleth himself with the Affairs of this Life*: that is, with other Affairs and Employments that are inconsistent with, or may draw him from that wherein he is engag'd. Which Rule teaches us not to entangle our selves so far in the Business of the World, as to unfit us for the main Business of our Christian Profession, or hinder us in the great Duties of Religion that appertain to it.

Another Rule observ'd in these Exercises, was Temperance and Continence. This is held forth in the next Verse of the Epistle for this Day; *Every Man that striveth for the Mastery, is temperate in all things*: that is, they who strove for Victory in those Games, were wont to prepare themselves by a temperate Diet, and to prevent the Impediments of Intemperance and Incontinence, which might impair the Strength and Agility of their Bodies, and so unfit them for those Exercises: not that they us'd so great Abstinence as to macerate and weaken their Bodies, for that would rather prejudice than promote their Designs; but that they forbore those Excesses in eating and drinking, and other sensual Pleasures, that might prove a Hindrance, and kept to that moderate Use of God's Creatures, as might best fit and strengthen them for the Undertaking.

And if they took so great Care, and underwent such Hardships for a little bodily Exercise, which profited nothing, and was intended only for a short Pastime and Diversion; how much greater Care and Pains ought we to take about the spiritual Exercises of Religion, which are design'd for the eternal Welfare and Salvation of our Souls? This the Apostle urges in the next words; *Now they do it to obtain a corruptible Crown, but we an incorruptible.* All that they ran and fought for, was but a Garland of Flowers, a Chaplet of Roses, or a Crown made of such fading Materials as soon wither'd away; things fitter to please Children, than to employ the Wit and Strength of Men: but we seek a never-fading Crown, a Kingdom that cannot be mov'd, reserv'd in Heaven for us. They strove only for a little empty Honour, and the vain Applause of the Multitude; but we for an eternal Weight of Glory, for Honour that is solid and substantial, permanent and lasting, yea, Eternal in the Heavens. And as there is a vast difference and disproportion in these things, so ought there to be in our Desires and Endeavours after them. This is the Apostle's

Argu-

Argument here, which, with all considering Persons, will be of great strength. But the better to enforce it upon Christians, he backs it with his own Example and Experience, saying, in the next words; *I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the Air:* that is, I move on in my Christian Course, not as one uncertain of the Way, or doubtful of receiving the Prize at the end of it; but as one well instructed and assured of both. And likewise in my Christian Warfare I fight, not as one that only wrings his Fist, and seems to strike without an Adversary, or as one that only brandishes his Sword, and beats the Air to no purpose; but I set my self in earnest, and strive effectually against the Enemies of God and my own Soul. And as the *Grecian* Racers and Combatants were wont to prepare their Bodies by Temperance and Continence for those Exercises, so *I keep under my Body*, (saith he) *and bring it into Subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I my self should be a Cast-away.* Where the Apostle, in *keeping under the Body*, alludes to the Custom of Wrestlers, who having foil'd their Adversary, keep him under, and bring him into subjection to them. In like manner St. *Paul* here, by the pious Exercises of Self-Denial and Mortification, brought himself under the Obedience and Discipline of Vertue and Religion, and kept the Flesh from rebelling against the Spirit; which he did, lest when he had preach'd or publish'd to others the Manner of striving, and the Way of winning the Prize, he himself should miscarry and miss of it.

This is the Drift of the Epistle for this Day, in which we are directed how to fight against our spiritual Enemies, so as to be able to gain the Victory; and how to run our Christian Race so as to be sure to obtain the Prize: the Greatness whereof, together with the Possibility and Certainty of attaining it, is sufficient to animate our Courage, and quicken our Endeavours after it.

It remains then that we seriously ponder upon, and put in practice these Precepts, observing the Rules of our Religion, and keeping our Bodies in Temperance, Soberness, and Chastity, all the days of our Lives. To which end, let us wean our selves from the World, and learn to live above the Frowns or Smiles of it; let us look thro and beyond all its Pomps and Vanities, and by the Eye of Faith behold the transcendent Joys and Glories of Heaven; and

that

that will help us to deſpiſe the admired Toys and Trifles of this Life, and aſpire to the greater and nobler Treaſures of that which is to come. Let us then fix our Eye upon the Goal and the Prize affix'd to it; looking, with the Apoſtle, not to the things that are ſeen, for they are temporal, but to the things that are not ſeen, for they are eternal: To which God of his infinite Mercy bring us all, thro the Merits of Jeſus Chriſt. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE XXXVI.

The GOSPEL for the *Septuageſima* Sunday, or the Third Sunday before *Lent*.

St. Matthew xx. 1——17.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Man that is an Houſholder, which went out early in the Morning to hire Labourers into his Vineyard: and when he had agreed with the Labourers for a Penny a day, he ſent them into his Vineyard, &c.

OUR Bleſſed Saviour had, in the laſt Verſe of the foregoing Chapter, told his Diſciples, that *many that are firſt ſhall be laſt, and the laſt ſhall be firſt*: by which he warn'd them, not to depend or value themſelves too much upon the Privilege of their being his firſt Diſciples: "For tho (ſaith he) you have ſome advantage of "other Men, in being ſo early in the Diſcipleſhip, as to "be the firſt that follow'd me, yet 'tis poſſible that ſome "that come after you, may labour as diligently, and de"ſerve as much, and ſo be as richly rewarded as you; "yea, 'tis not altogether improbable, that ſome may ariſe "who may *labour more abundantly than you all*, (as St. *Paul* "did) and conſequently tho they come after, may be pre"fer'd before you: and ſo you that are firſt may be laſt, "and they that were laſt may be firſt."

And then follows a Parable to illuſtrate this matter, which is the Goſpel for this Day; in which our Saviour ſhews

shews us the manner of God's dealing with and rewarding his faithful Servants; which is, with all Justice and Kindness, according to his own Good-will and Pleasure. I shall therefore explain the Parable in the several Parts and Passages of it, and withal shew some of those excellent Lessons and Divine Truths, that may be learnt from it.

The Parable begins, in the first Verse, with these words; *The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Housholder, which went out early in the Morning to hire Labourers into his Vineyard.* By *the Kingdom of Heaven* here we are to understand the State of the Gospel, or the Kingdom of the Messiah, consisting of all the Members of his Church as his Subjects; in which sense the Kingdom of Heaven is often taken in the New Testament. By *the Housholder* here, to whom this Kingdom is liken'd, may be meant either God the Father, the supreme Lord and Governour of the Universe, or God the Son, whom he hath made the Head and Ruler of his Church. This Housholder is here said to go *out early in the Morning to hire Labourers into his Vineyard*: which, in a literal sense, is a Man's going by Break of Day, or as soon as it is light, into the Market-place, where Day-Labourers were wont to stand, expecting Employment, there to get or hire Servants to work in his Vineyard. But the mystical or spiritual Sense of those words, is Christ's calling or sending forth his Apostles in the beginning or early days of Christianity, to plant the Gospel, and propagate the Christian Faith in the World. This is still'd, *the Lord of the Harvest's sending forth Labourers into his Harvest*; which Christ wills us, for our own and the Church's good, to *pray for*, Mat. 9. 37, 38. Where by *the Harvest* is meant the Field of the Church, into which the Apostles were sent to manure and manage it, gathering those that were ripe and ready to receive the Gospel, into his Barn, that so yielding the Fruits of Righteousness, they might in the end reap everlasting Life. So the *Vineyard* here is likewise to be understood of the same Church of Christ, into which his Ministers are sent to dress and prune it, that it may bring forth Fruit unto Holiness, and at last grow up likewise unto eternal Life.

It follows in the Parable, *And when he had agreed with the Labourers for a Penny a day, he sent them into his Vineyard.* 'Twas said before, that he went out to *hire* Labourers, and here we have an account of their Pay, which was agreed between them; and that was *a Penny a day*. This *Summer*

in

in the Original, which we tranſlate a Penny, was of the value of a Drachm, weighing the eighth part of an Ounce, which amounted to about ſeven Pence Halfpenny with us. This was the Hire contracted for, to ſhew that God never ſets any on work without promiſing and paying their Wages; he knows *the Labourer is worthy of his Hire*, and acts accordingly: he doth not look that any ſhould do his work for nothing; he is no ſuch hard Maſter, as to expect to *gather where he hath not ſtrewed*, or *to reap where he hath not ſowed*; but conſiders every one's Labour, and rewards them according to their work. And having thus agreed with them, *he ſent them into his Vineyard*. This is meant of Chriſt's calling his Apoſtles, and ſending forth his Miniſters into his Church, with a Power to preach the Goſpel, and inſtruct his People in the Myſteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. Of this we read, *Mat.* 10. 1, &c. where we find Chriſt commiſſioning his Apoſtles and Diſciples to this Work, telling them what they ſhould do, how they ſhould behave themſelves to the People, and the People to them, that they might increaſe the Flock of Chriſt, and daily add unto the Church ſuch as ſhould be ſaved.

After this, it follows, *And he went out about the third Hour, and ſaw others ſtanding idle in the Market-place, and ſaid unto them, Go ye alſo into the Vineyard, and whatſoever is right I will give unto you: And they went their way.* Where his going out *about the third Hour*, was about nine of the clock in the Morning with us; for they began their Computation of the Day a little after Sun-riſing, where our ſix of the clock was their firſt Hour, and ſo their third Hour muſt be our ninth. Then it was that he went out, and ſaw ſome ſtanding idle in the Market-place, and finding them without any Employment in that place of Buſineſs, he bid them go alſo into his Vineyard, and work there. By which we ſee, our Saviour was no Friend to Idleneſs; he would have every one engag'd in ſome honeſt and lawful Calling, and carefully attend the Buſineſs of it: and therefore ſeeing thoſe idle and unemploy'd, he preſently ſet them to work, and bid them go into his Vineyard. But here 'tis to be obſerv'd, that he made no Agreement with theſe about their Hire, nor would he bind himſelf to give the Wages of a whole Day for a part of it; but whatſoever is right and fitting (ſaith he) and according as you follow your Work for the time that you are in the Vineyard, you ſhall be rewarded. And with theſe Promiſes

and

and Hopes they went their way, and ſet themſelves to work.

Again, 'tis ſaid in the next Verſe, *That he went out about the ſixth and ninth Hour*; that is, according to the former Computation about our twelve at Noon, and three in the Afternoon: then *he went forth again, and did likewiſe*, ſending others into his Vineyard in like manner.

Moreover, *about the eleventh Hour*, which by the former Reckoning is about five in the Evening with us, he *went out again, and found others ſtanding idle, and ſaith unto them, Why ſtand ye here all the day idle?* By which Queſtion he ſeems to check and rebuke them for their Idleneſs, as being a great Loſs of Time, and a lazy Neglect of the Gifts and Talents intruſted with them. But the Anſwer they gave, ſeem'd to carry a very plauſible Excuſe; for *they ſaid unto him, Becauſe no Man hath hired us:* whereby they aſcrib'd their not being employ'd, not to any love of Idleneſs, or any indulging of Sloth and Lazineſs, but only to want of Work; they ſeem'd willing to be employ'd, and ſtood there looking for Work, but 'twas their hard fate not to meet with any; for *no Man* (ſay they) *hath hired us.*

The Houſholder perceiving this, *ſaith unto them, Go ye alſo into the Vineyard.* He would have none continue idle and without Buſineſs, which would betray them into the power of the Devil, and expoſe them to all his Temptations; but ſet to work all that wanted, and were willing to be employ'd, at what time ſoever they came in: telling them withal, that *whatſoever is right* according to the time, *that ſhall ye receive*; ver. 6, 7. Where he encourages them to go on diligently and cheerfully in their Work, becauſe their Labour ſhould not be in vain.

This is the Firſt Part of this Parable, wherein the Houſholder hath ſet all that are capable and unemploy'd, hard at work. But before I go on to the Second, which is his calling the Labourers to receive their Wages, give me leave to infer a few things from what hath been already ſaid in this Parable.

And, *1ſt*, From Chriſt's ſending ſo many Labourers into his Vineyard, we may learn the unſpeakable Goodneſs of God, in taking ſo great care of his Church. When Chriſt had order'd and ſettled the Chriſtian Church in the World, he gave ſome to plant, and others to water it every where: and God himſelf was graciouſly pleas'd by their means to give it a very great Increaſe, by the Acceſſion of *Jews* and

Gentiles

Gentiles into it. And when the Harveſt became plenteous, and the Labourers few, he vouchſaf'd to ſend more Labourers into the Harveſt. Here we find him ſending one after another, as the Neceſſities of the Church require; ſome at the third, others at the ſixth and ninth Hour, others again at the eleventh Hour; calling ſome ſooner, ſome later into his Vineyard, thereby taking care for a conſtant Succeſſion of Paſtors and Teachers to inſtruct and govern his People, promiſing *to be with them always*, to aſſiſt and bleſs them, *to the end of the World*. Hence we find God Almighty declaring by the Prophet *Iſaiah*, what he had done for his Vineyard, how *he had fenced it, and gather'd out the Stones thereof, and planted it with the choiceſt Vine, and built a Tower in the midſt of it, and alſo made a Wine-preſs therein*; and then asks the Queſtion, *What could have been done more to my Vineyard, that I have not done in it?* Iſa. 5. 2, 3, 4. All which, together with his ſending Workmen into it to prune and manure it, ſhew ſo great a Care and Goodneſs towards his Church, as ought to be for ever acknowledg'd by all the Members of it.

2dly, From Chriſt's ſending Labourers into his Vineyard, we learn the Duty of his Miniſters; which is, to be diligent and laborious in the Buſineſs about which he hath ſet them: for he ſent Labourers, not Loiterers, into his Vineyard; he ſent them there not barely to reap the Fruit of the Vine, or to revel it in the Blood of the Grape, but to dreſs and to prune it, to *labour in the Word and Doctrine*, to *be inſtant in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon*, and to ſtudy to be *Workmen that need not to be aſhamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth*. The Man in the Goſpel that had two Sons, ſent them both to *work*, not to play *in his Vineyard*, *Mat.* 21. 28, 29. And tho one of them ſaid, he would *not go* to work in it, yet he after *repented and went*; and he was more commended and rewarded than the other, who ſaid, *I go Sir, and went not*, as we read in that Chapter: to ſhew that God regards the true honeſt Labourer, but rejects the falſe hypocritical Loiterer in his Vineyard. He allows none to ſtand idle, but requires all to move and act diligently in his Work; and to be *not ſlothful in Buſineſs, but fervent in Spirit, ſerving the Lord*.

3dly, From God's taking ſo great care of his Church, and ſending ſo many Labourers into it, we learn likewiſe the Peoples Duty, which is to improve by theſe means, and to be fruitful in every good Word and Work. *Who*

planteth

planteth a Vineyard (saith the Apostle) *and eateth not of the Fruit thereof?* 1 Cor. 9. 7. He that is at any pains or charge herein, will reasonably expect to reap some Benefit or Comfort from it; otherwise like the barren Fig-tree, it will be cut down, and cast into the Fire. If we do not improve by these means of Grace, they will hereafter prove our greater Condemnation. Wherefore let us labour to grow in Grace, and the Knowledg of our Lord Jesus Christ, bringing forth Fruit unto Holiness, and in the end we shall receive everlasting Life. And this will lead me to the

Second Part of the Parable, which is the calling of the Labourers to receive their Wages: and this begins at the eighth Verse, in these words; *So when Even was come, the Lord of the Vineyard saith unto his Steward, Call the Labourers, and give them their Hire.* By which is meant, that Christ at the Evening or End of the World will send his holy Angels, to summon all Men to appear and stand before him, to receive according to their Works. But in the Parable the Order of reckoning with them is somewhat observable; for the Steward was bid to begin with those that came last into the Vineyard, and so to go on to the first; *beginning* (saith the Text) *from the last to the first.* Which was done, partly to keep the Disciples from all ambitious Thoughts and Desires of Precedence, and partly to encourage Men at all Times and Ages to come in, and to keep the latest Penitents from Despair. According to this method, they that *were hired at the eleventh Hour*, that is, about five in the Afternoon, were call'd in; and when they came, *received every Man a Penny.* God is a liberal Rewarder of short, if sincere, Services; and adds a vantage Blessing for the Diligence and Fidelity of the Work.

But when the first came, who had been much longer in the Vineyard, even from Morning to Evening, they suppos'd that they should have receiv'd more, according to the number of the Hours they had wrought above them; but *they likewise received every Man a Penny.* God measures out the Wages not by the Time, but by the Work: he that does but little Work in a longer time, shall have no more than he that doth the same in a less; and he that labours hard in one Hour, shall receive as much as he that loiters in more. However, *when they received it*, and saw no more come, they began to *murmur against the good Man*

of the Houſe, complaining of the Inequality and ſeeming Injuſtice of the Diſtribution; *ſaying, Theſe laſt have wrought but one Hour, and thou haſt made them equal unto us, who have borne the Burden and Heat of the Day*: that is, thou haſt given them as much Wages for a little ſpace of time, as thou haſt to us, who have labour'd all the Day long. Moſt Men are apt to grumble and complain againſt God, if they have not always what they would have; without reflecting upon themſelves, or conſidering the true Cauſe of it. This was evident in the murmuring *Iſraelites*, who were wont upon all occaſions to murmur againſt God if every thing did not go to their Mind: And the ſame Fault is but too viſible among many of us, who upon every Change of Weather, or any Misfortune that ſeems to threaten or befal us, are preſently complaining againſt Heaven, and apt to charge God fooliſhly.

But what Anſwer did the Houſholder make to theſe Complainants? Why, that the next words declare; *He anſwer'd one of them, and ſaid, Friend, I do thee no wrong: Didſt thou not agree with me for a Penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this laſt, even as unto thee.* Where we may obſerve,

1*ſt*, That care is to be taken, that we not only do no wrong to any, but avoid all ſuſpicion of it. For we find the Houſholder here clearing himſelf from all Jealouſy in this matter, ſaying, *Friend, I do thee no wrong:* which we ſhould be able to ſay in all Caſes; for he that does wrong to another, does a much greater wrong to his own Soul. Again, we may obſerve,

2*dly*, That all Contracts and Agreements are to be kept and ſtood to, however they may ſeem to croſs our Humour, Intereſt, or Deſigns; *Didſt thou not agree with me for a Penny?* ſaith the Houſholder. No wrong is done, whilſt Men keep true to Bargains and Contracts; but to do otherwiſe, is great Falſhood and Injuſtice. God loves Truth in our Words, and Faithfulneſs in our Promiſes, but he abhors all Breaches and Falſifying in either; he is wont amply to reward the former, and never fails ſorely to puniſh the latter.

Take there *that thine is, and go thy way.* 'Tis the Duty and Property of all good Servants and honeſt Labourers to be content with their Wages, according to Agreement, and to go away ſatisfy'd with their appointed Hire, without muttering or complaining againſt their Maſter. He having

having done them Justice, in giving them their full Pay, they must not prescribe to him, but leave him to shew Kindness, and exercise his Bounty, where he shall think fit.

I will give unto this last (saith he) *even as unto thee.* And perhaps with good reason; for this Man's coming so late was not his own Fault, but his Misfortune, *because no Man had hired him*, ver. 7. He had come sooner, if he had been call'd. Beside, after his coming he kept close to his Work, doubled his Diligence, and did double the Service to any of the former; and therefore I who accept the Will for the Deed, and have an Eye upon the Diligence and Chearfulness of a Labourer, will give the same Reward unto him, as I do unto thee.

Neither can this be charg'd with the least Injustice, for *is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?* Have not I the free and full Disposal of my own Bounty? Must I ask leave of others, how, and when, and to whom I shall bestow my own Gifts? *The Earth is mine* (saith the Lord) *and the Fulness thereof; the Heavens also are mine, and all that is therein:* and as they are both the Works of his Hand, so may he dispose of them according to his Will. None can challenge any thing from him by way of Merit, and all that any receive of him, is purely the Largess of his own Bounty; so that he may shew mercy to whom he will shew mercy, and none may say unto him, What dost thou?

There may be many Reasons best known to him, and not fit for us to enquire into, why the last that come into the Vineyard, may be rewarded and prefer'd before the first: as the Thief's confessing Christ upon the Cross, when some of his own Disciples deny'd and forsook him; and *Paul*'s labouring more abundantly than they all, which made him be rank'd among the chiefest of the Apostles: and therefore it will not become us to judg or complain of God's dealing with any other.

Neither should God's shewing Favour unto some, become an Eye-sore unto others; for *is thine Eye evil* (saith he) *because I am good?* Is it fit for you to cast an envious Eye upon any, only because I have look'd graciously upon them? or to take occasion to entertain Grudges, merely from my favourable Glances towards them? Must I consult you in bestowing my Favours, and do nothing but what you please? This is the very Height of Arrogance

and Preſumption, and you juſtly forfeit all Title to Favour by ſuch inſolent Behaviour: *So that* (as the Goſpel concludes) *the laſt ſhall be firſt, and the firſt laſt; for many be call'd, but few choſen.* By which we ſee the Truth of what our Saviour before told his Diſciples, that tho they were firſt call'd, yet ſome might and would come after them, that would out-ſtrip them in Diligence, and ſo equal or exceed them in the Reward. A clear Inſtance of this we have in the *Jews*, who tho they were the Perſons to whom God was firſt made known, and to whom Chriſt and the Goſpel were firſt ſent; yet few of them embracing and continuing in the Faith, the *Gentiles* that came in after, were prefer'd before them, and are receiv'd into Favour, when the other are rejected: which occaſion'd thoſe words of our Saviour, *Many are call'd, but few are choſen*; that is, many are call'd to the outward Privileges and Profeſſion of the Goſpel, but few by accepting the Terms are ſelected to the Reward of eternal Life.

This is briefly the Senſe and Scope of this Parable appointed for the Goſpel of this Day, which contains many good Leſſons; I ſhall conclude with a few. And,

1*ſt*, We may learn hence not to depend too much upon any external Privileges; for tho we are call'd to the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and it may be before many others, yet without a ſuitable Converſation, we may come behind many that come after us.

2*dly*, From what hath been ſaid, let us learn to avoid Idleneſs, the Bane of Vertue, and the Nurſery of all Vice; and labour to be always well employ'd in the Buſineſs of our particular or general Calling; that when our Lord cometh, he may find and reward us for ſo doing.

Laſtly, Let us learn hence not to defer our Repentance, nor yet to deſpair of Mercy, at what time ſoever we come in; for tho late Repentance be ſeldom true, yet 'tis never too late to repent. You find that he that came in the laſt hour was rewarded as well as the firſt; the penitent Thief found favour upon the Croſs: there was one ſuch, that none may deſpair; and but one, that none may preſume.

DIS-

DISCOURSE XXXVII.

The EPISTLE for *Sexageſima* Sunday, or the Second Sunday before *Lent*.

2 Cor. xi. 19——32.

Ye ſuffer Fools gladly, ſeeing you your ſelves are wiſe; for ye ſuffer if a Man bring you into Bondage, if a Man devour you, if a Man take of you, if a Man exalt himſelf, if a Man ſmite you on the Face, &c.

THE Collect for this Day prays unto God, that ſince we put not our Truſt in any thing that we do, he would mercifully grant, that by his Power we may be defended againſt all Adverſity.

The Epiſtle for the Day contains St. *Paul*'s Defence or Vindication of himſelf againſt the Reproaches of falſe Teachers, and thoſe that were ſeduced by them; which he manages with ſome kind of Zeal and Indignation.

The falſe Teachers againſt whom he ſets himſelf are deſcrib'd in the foregoing part of the Chapter, to be *falſe Apoſtles, deceitful Workers, transforming themſelves into the Apoſtles of Chriſt*: imitating them in ſome things, and in others pretending to exceed them. And no wonder (ſaith he, ver. 13, 14, 15.) *for Satan himſelf is transform'd into an Angel of Light*; and therefore it may not be thought ſtrange, *if his Miniſters alſo transform themſelves into Miniſters of Righteouſneſs*; tho time will diſcover their Hypocriſy, and their *End ſhall be according to their Works.*

Theſe falſe Teachers had vilify'd this great Apoſtle, merely to exalt themſelves; and had us'd evil Arts, to get their Perſons in Admiration among the People, that they might deſpiſe him. This put him upon a Neceſſity of publiſhing his own Praiſes, which tho it might look like a piece of fooliſh Vanity, yet their forcing him to it by their Detraction and Calumny, was ſufficient both to excuſe and to juſtify it.

Let no Man then think me a Fool, in thus boasting (saith he, ver. 16.) or if it be a piece of Folly, yet pardon me in it, if being restrain'd thereunto, *I boast my self a little*; for *since many glory after the Flesh*, (saith he, ver. 18.) *I will glory also.* And I trust you will give me leave to do so, having much more Reason than they.

And then follows the Epistle for this Day, which begins thus; *For ye suffer Fools gladly, seeing ye your selves are wise:* that is, you that have an Opinion of your own Wisdom, may well enough bear with the Follies of such as you think are not so wise as your selves; for as the Strong are to bear with the Infirmities of the Weak, so are the Wise to excuse the Weaknesses of the Unwise. The Expression is ironical against such as presume too much upon their own Wisdom, and 'tis as if he had said, "You that are wise, may be rather pleas'd than angry, to see others sometimes play "the fool; it being rather a setting off, than eclipsing "of your Wisdom, and so may be rather a Diversion "than any Offence to you: especially considering how "much greater things you bear from false Teachers, who "seek only to betray and beguile you. And I hope (saith "he) you will bear with this Defect in me, if it be so; "which yet is innocent and harmless, seeing that for all "you are so wise, you bear with far greater Faults in my "Adversaries, who do not so heartily wish and desire your "Welfare. And indeed there is no Burden too heavy for "you to bear, that is laid on by them; and there is no "Hardship or Oppression of theirs, but you can undergo "without the least Murmuring or Impatience."

So he tells them in the next Verse, *For ye suffer if a Man bring you into Bondage, if a Man devour you, if a Man take of you, if a Man exalt himself, if a Man smite you on the Face.* Where the Apostle reckons up some of the many Hardships, which they contentedly endur'd from those false and deceitful Teachers: The first whereof was, their being *brought into Bondage* by them. By which is meant, their being enslav'd by their false Doctrine, and led captive by their Errors; which Captivity of the Mind is the worst of all Bondage, for thereby the nobler part, the Soul, is enslav'd to the imperious Dictates of their Leaders, tho they be never so false: and yet this Yoke is commonly put by false Teachers upon the Necks of their Disciples, whereby they are turn'd from the Truth, and turn unto Fables; which Yoke they are yet willing to bear at their hands.

Again,

Again, *2dly, Ye ſuffer, if a Man devour you*: that is, if theſe falſe Teachers live upon you, without ever making any Return, and ſo deſpoil you of all that you have; if by their falſe Pretences they devour you, as the *Phariſees* did the Widows Houſes by their long Prayers, you ſeem not to groan under it, but ſuffer it patiently.

Again, *Ye ſuffer, if a Man take of you*; that is, by way of Preſents, pretending to take nothing by way of Recompence, you ſuffer your ſelves to be impos'd upon by theſe Arts.

Moreover, *Ye ſuffer, if a Man exalt himſelf*: that is, if they aſſume to themſelves an Honour or Power that belongs not to them, tyrannizing over your Conſciences, and exerciſing a Dominion over your Faith, which they have no right to; you are content to bear it, having their Perſons in admiration becauſe of advantage.

Again, laſtly, *Ye ſuffer, if a Man ſmite you on the face*: if they deal never ſo rudely and roughly with you, if they uſe you never ſo contumeliouſly, you are willing to take that, or any thing at their hands, being deceiv'd by their Wiles and vain Pretences. Whereas we that mean honeſtly, and ſeek only the Good and Salvation of your Souls, have not half that Influence or Authority over you. Thus was he driven, in vindication of his own Integrity, to lay open the Fallacies and falſe Games of thoſe Deceivers.

Theſe things *I ſpeak* (ſaith he, in the following words) *as concerning Reproach, as tho we had been weak*: that is, I have minded you of theſe matters, to let you know what hard Uſage they have ſhew'd to you, and what vile Reproaches they have caſt upon me, whom they have vilify'd and ſet at nought, as one weak in Mind, and ſlow of Underſtanding. *Howbeit* (ſaith he) *wherein ſoever any is bold, I ſpeak fooliſhly, I am bold alſo*: meaning, that whatever Advantages theſe falſe Teachers may pretend to, to magnify themſelves above me, yet I muſt tell you (tho it may look like fooliſh Boaſting) that I equal, if not excel them in all. And to ſatisfy you herein, 'twill be neceſſary to particularize ſome of the chiefeſt of them. As for inſtance,

Are they Hebrews? (ſaith he) *ſo am I: Are they* Iſraelites? *ſo am I: Are they the Seed of* Abraham? *ſo am I.* If they boaſt of their Deſcent, as coming from the Race of the *Jews*, the Stock of the *Iſraelites*, or the Line of the Patriarchs; I can ſay the ſame: ſo that herein they can pretend to no advantage of me in point of Pedegree or

Deſcent, which is in all points the ſame. If we come down to the Times of the Meſſiah, let me ask further, *Are they the Miniſters of Chriſt?* I muſt tell you (tho I may be thought to *ſpeak like a Fool*) *I am more*; meaning, that he was more than an ordinary Apoſtle, having taken more pains, and been *in Labours more abundant*, than they all.

But becauſe thoſe Seducers boaſted much of their great Sufferings for the Name and Cauſe of Chriſt, to beget the more Favour and Credit among their Diſciples, St. *Paul* declares that in that point likewiſe he far exceeded them all: to prove which, he gives us a Catalogue of the many and great Sufferings he underwent for the Doctrine of Chriſt. This he doth in the following Verſes, where he tells us, *ver.* 23. that he was

In Stripes above meaſure. This relates to the frequent Scourgings he met with from the *Jews* and *Romans*: *Of the* Jews (ſaith he) *five times received I forty Stripes ſave one*, ver. 24. The number of Stripes among the *Jews* in caſes of whipping, was not to exceed forty, as we read, *Deut.* 23. 5. but in many caſes that Law allow'd a Mitigation, and 'twas frequent with them to abate one. The manner of inflicting it was with a Rod of three Branches, or with one twiſted Cord, that had two more faſten'd to it. So that every Stroke gave three Stripes, which being an odd number, could not make the even number of forty; and therefore becauſe they would not exceed, they reſted at thirty nine. Now five times (ſaith the Apoſtle) did I undergo the Severity of this Puniſhment, without any Mitigation at the hands of the *Jews*. *Thrice* (ſaith he) *was I beaten with Rods*; that was by the *Romans*, whoſe Officers were wont with ſmall Rods or Wands to beat Malefactors. So did they uſe the Apoſtles, *Acts* 5. 40. the Extremity whereof St. *Paul* felt three times. *Once* (ſaith he) *was I ſtoned*; that was at a ſeditious Tumult of Zealots, of which we read, *Acts* 14. 19. where without any judicial Proceſs he was *ſtoned*, and *drawn out of the City, ſuppoſing him to be dead.*

Thrice (ſaith he) *I ſuffer'd ſhipwreck*: of which we read in the Acts of the Apoſtles; the laſt whereof is mention'd, *Chap.* 24. where the Ship being daſh'd with the Violence of the Waves, St. *Paul* and his Company ſwam to ſhore upon ſome Planks, and ſaved themſelves upon ſome Parcel of the Wreck.

A

A Night and a Day (as he goes on) *I have been in the Deep.* What this Deep was, is not eaſily to be underſtood from Scripture, and is variouſly interpreted by Authors: Of the Depth of the Sea, it cannot be meant, being impoſſible without a Miracle to continue alive there ſo long. Some therefore underſtand it of a Priſon, in which there was a deep Cave or Dungeon, into which St. *Paul* was caſt, *Acts* 16. 24. Others of a Well, which for its Depth was call'd βυθος, in which after his Danger in *Lyſtra* he hid himſelf: in either or both of which he was in the Depth of Miſery and Diſtreſs, call'd therefore the Deep.

Again, he tells us, that he was *in Priſons frequent*; being more than once a Priſoner at *Rome*, at *Philippi*, and other places.

In Deaths oft; not that he could actually die more than once, but that he was oft-times in danger of Death, and ſometimes ſuppos'd to be dead, as in the Tumult mention'd *Acts* 14. 19.

Moreover, he tells us, *ver.* 26. that he was *in Journeyings often*; ſtill moving from place to place, like one that had no ſettled Habitation.

In Perils by Waters, being many times in danger of drowning.

In Perils by Robbers, who ſet upon him, and put him in danger of his Life.

In Perils by my own Countrymen, who accus'd me for a Perverter of the People, and a Subverter of *Moſes*'s Law, by preaching Doctrines contrary to the Cuſtoms and Traditions of the Elders; and thereby expos'd me to the Rage and Fury of the *Jews*.

In Perils by the Heathen, who charg'd me with decrying their Idol Gods, and deſtroying their Pagan Worſhip, and ſo brought me under the Laws and Malice of the *Romans*.

In Perils in the City; that is, at *Rome*, where I was twice a Priſoner, and endur'd great Hardſhips in both: or elſe at *Epheſus* the Metropolis of *Aſia*, where (ſaith he) *I fought with Beaſts*, 1 Cor. 15. 32. meaning, that according to the Cuſtom of the *Romans* with Malefactors, they let looſe wild Beaſts upon him, from which with great difficulty he rid himſelf, almoſt *deſpairing of Life, and having the Sentence of Death paſt upon him*, 2 Cor. 1. 8, 9.

In Perils in the Wilderneſs, where he was pinch'd with Want, and almoſt famiſh'd with Neceſſity.

In Perils in the Sea, where he was more than once ſhip-wreck'd.

In

In Perils among falſe Brethren, who pretended Friendſhip, and all the while intended nothing but Miſchief in their hearts. Theſe falſe Brethren were ſome of thoſe Judaizing Chriſtians, who blended Judaiſm with Chriſtianity, and trimm'd between the Law and the Goſpel; and theſe put the Apoſtle to no ſmall trouble and pains.

For he tells us, in the next words, that he was *in Wearineſs and Painfulneſs*; being tir'd with the Oppoſition and Contradiction of Sinners, which made him ſometimes almoſt weary and faint in his Mind.

This put him upon *Watchings often*, being ſtill upon his guard to preſerve himſelf from the Wiles and Wickedneſs of ſuch Enemies; which things brought him *in Hunger and Thirſt, in Faſtings often, in Cold and Nakedneſs:* whereby he was exercis'd in all kinds and degrees of Diſtreſs.

But *beſides thoſe things that are without*, that is, without in the Body, or without the Church; *I might add* (ſaith he) *that which cometh upon me daily, the Care of all the Churches*, which requires continual Vigilance and Solicitude about the Affairs of them. Here we may obſerve, that what is here ſaid of St. *Paul*, was never ſaid of St. *Peter*, that he had the care of all the Churches: had that been any where affirm'd of him, we had heard of it in both ears from the Romiſh Writers, and had been indeed a better Argument and better Authority for the Pope's pretended Juriſdiction over all other Churches, than hath been ever yet alledg'd. But the Silence of the Scripture therein hath ſhew'd all thoſe Pretenſions to be utterly vain and groundleſs. This is a brief Account of the Troubles and Difficulties that befel St. *Paul* in the Exerciſe of his Office, with which the Sufferings boaſted of by the falſe Teachers, are not fit to be nam'd or compar'd.

But becauſe thoſe falſe Teachers or Deceivers pretended a greater Love and Care of Mens Souls, than the true Apoſtles and Miniſters of Chriſt, merely to cover their Hypocriſy and Double-dealing with them; the Apoſtle in the following words declares his more true and real Concern for their Welfare, appealing to their own Experience of that intire Affection and Sympathy they had found in him: asking in the next Verſe, *Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?* If any be ſick or ill-affected either in Body or Mind, you know my Readineſs to ſuccour and ſympathize with him: if any by a Temptation fall off from the Faith, or by the Occaſion and Exam-

ple

ple of any other fall into Sin or Error, you cannot but ſee how I burn with Grief and a holy Indignation for them, and uſe all Ways and Means to reclaim him.

I ſhall add no more (ſaith he) by way of boaſting, to which you have conſtrain'd me for my own Vindication: but *if I muſt needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern my Infirmities*; with what Patience and Courage I ſuſtain'd them; and will magnify the Grace of God given to me, to enable me ſo to do.

Finally, The Epiſtle concludes with the Apoſtle's Obteſtation, or calling God to witneſs for the Truth and Sincerity of what he had ſaid unto them: *The God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt* (ſaith he) *which is God bleſſed for evermore, knoweth that I lye not*: that is, in all that I have deliver'd to you, the Searcher of Hearts knows, that I have uſed no Art or Equivocation, but have truly and faithfully ſpoken my mind to you, without the leaſt Falſifying or Diſſimulation.

This is the Senſe and Subſtance of the Epiſtle for the Day; which may inſtruct us in two or three uſeful Leſſons: As,

1ſt, To *beware of falſe Teachers, who come to you in Sheeps clothing*, that is, with ſoft and ſmooth Pretences; *but inwardly are ravening Wolves*, that with their long Prayers ſeek only to prey upon and devour you, *Mat.* 7. 15. 'Tis our Saviour's Caution, who beſt knew their Deſigns, and their Ways of compaſſing them, which we may well think are very pernicious, when he bids us to *believe them not, and to go not after them*, Mat. 24. that is, neither to receive their Doctrine, nor follow their Example. St. *John* gives the ſame Advice; *Beloved, believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits, whether they be of God, for many falſe Prophets are gone abroad into the World*: 1 John 4. 1. St. *Paul* found them ſeducing the *Corinthians* into Sects and Parties, and uſing all the Arts of Inſinuation and Sophiſtry to that end; which coſt him a great deal of trouble to detect and preſerve them from them. Our Saviour hath given us a Rule to diſcern them, *Mat.* 7. 16. *By their Fruits you ſhall know them.* If inſtead of Peace and Unity ſo much preſs'd by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, they preach the People into Contentions, Schiſms, and Diviſions, you may ſafely conclude them to be not the Meſſengers of Chriſt, but the Emiſſaries of Satan; and therefore to be avoided by all good Chriſtians,

stians, who should neither come into their Secrets, nor be united to their Assemblies.

2dly, From this Discourse we may learn, that tho Boasting is for the most part arrogant and vain, as ascribing too much to a Man's self, and allowing too little to others; yet in some cases it may be just and innocent, and at some times necessary. For we find St. *Paul*, who was as great an Enemy to Boasting as any, here constrain'd to it by the evil Arts of Deceivers. And the Cases wherein this may be allow'd, are wherein the Glory of God and Mens Salvation are concern'd, and likewise where a Man's Person and Office are too much vilify'd and undervalu'd. In these Cases we find *Moses* and *David*, and others in the Old Testament, speaking great things of themselves, when the Gifts and Graces of God given to them for the Good of others were too much despis'd and vilify'd by their Enemies. In the New Testament we find St. *Paul* magnifying his Office, when others sought to lessen it; and here we find him boasting of higher Privileges and greater Services done to the Church, than any of the false Teachers, who sate themselves in opposition against him: which is sufficient to justify the same Practice upon the like occasions.

Lastly, We may learn from hence to *hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering*, and to stand our ground against all that would corrupt or undermine it. That such there were in the Apostles days, who labour'd to bring in damnable Errors, denying the Lord that bought them, is evident by St. *Paul*'s Encounter here and elsewhere with false Teachers: and that there are too many such in our days, the great Apostacy from the Faith, and the sad Decay of Order and Discipline in the Church of Christ too plainly verify. These we are to resist stedfast in the Faith, and not suffer our selves to be seduc'd from the Doctrine and Communion of the Church by such Impostors. In short then, let us by the Example of this great Apostle quit our selves like good Soldiers of Jesus Christ, manfully fighting his Battels against the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, and continuing his faithful Soldiers and Servants to our lives end. This we have all promis'd, which if we perform, we shall not fail to receive a Crown of Glory: which God grant, *&c.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE XXXVIII.

The GOSPEL for *Sexageſima* Sunday, or the Second Sunday before *Lent*.

St. Luke viii. 4——16.

When much People were gather'd together, and were come to him out of every City, he ſpake by a Parable. A Sower went out to ſow his Seed, and as he ſowed, ſome fell by the Way-ſide, &c.

THIS Goſpel for the Day contains the Parable of a Sower, deliver'd before a very great Multitude, by our Bleſſed Saviour, who was wont to inſtruct the People by ſuch Figures and Reſemblances; being an eaſy and familiar way of inſtilling Knowledg into them.

The Goſpel begins with theſe words; *When much People were gathered together, and were come to him out of every City, he ſpake by a Parable.* The foregoing Verſes tell us, that Jeſus went throughout every City and Village, preaching the Glad-tidings of the Kingdom of God. And when he departed thence, great Multitudes followed him to the Sea-ſide, coming out of every City, and gather'd themſelves about him; inſomuch, that (as St. *Matthew* relating this ſame Paſſage, tells us, *Mat.* 13. 1, 4.) he *went into a Ship and ſate down, the whole Multitude ſtanding on the Shore*; where being ſeated, he *ſpake many things to them in Parables*, whereof this which follows was one. This way of Teaching by Parables was frequently us'd among the *Jews*, being apt to leave the moſt lively and laſting Impreſſions upon the Mind; and therefore 'twas followed by our Bleſſed Saviour, who taught his Diſciples the Myſteries of the Kingdom of Heaven by ſuch apt Similitudes.

But to come to the Parable here related by St. *Luke*; in ſpeaking to which, I ſhall conſider,

Firſt,

First, The Parable it ſelf.
Secondly, The Explication or Unfolding of it. And,
Thirdly, The Uſe and Application to be made of it. And,

First, For the Parable it ſelf in the literal Senſe, that we have from the fifth to the eighth Verſe; where we read, that *a Sower went out in the Field to ſow his Seed, and as he ſowed, ſome fell by the Way-ſide*: that is, ſome of the Seed fell on the Path or Ground left unplough'd, for a Foot-paſſage through the Field; where being trodden down and expos'd to the Birds, the Fowls of the Air devour'd it. Some fell upon a Rock or ſtony Ground, where as ſoon as it ſprung it up it wither'd away, becauſe it lacked Moiſture. St. *Matthew* expreſſes it, that for want of deepneſs of Earth, and firm rooting, when the Sun was up, it was ſoon ſcorch'd and died away. Some again, *fell among Thorns, and the Thorns ſprang up with it, and choak'd it*: that is, where the Roots and Briars were not deſtroy'd, they overgrew the Corn, and ſo quite ſuppreſs'd the Growth of it. And, laſtly, *Some fell on good Ground, and ſprang up, and bare Fruit an hundred Fold*: where falling on a fertile Soil, it encreas'd wonderfully, yielding at Harveſt an hundred Seeds for one that was ſowed.

Theſe things are ſo well known and experienc'd by all Husbandmen, as not to need any farther inſiſting on them: only we may obſerve here, that Chriſt in teaching the People, admirably accommodated his Inſtructions, ſometimes to the Temper and Employments, ſometimes to the Exigencies and other Circumſtances of their Conditions; the better to inſinuate his Doctrine, and to make it take with them. When Fiſhermen were to be converted and made his Diſciples, he convinced them by an extraordinary and unexpected Draught of Fiſhes, to take them in their own way. When great Multitudes, that follow'd him till they almoſt fainted and pin'd away with Hunger, were to be gain'd over to him, he did it by a ſeaſonable Inſtance of his Divine Power, in *feeding five Thouſand with five Loaves and two little Fiſhes*, Matth. 14. where his relieving them in Diſtreſs, made way for the receiving his Doctrine, and his ſatisfying their Hunger, ſatisfy'd and remov'd all their Doubts. So here, when our Saviour would inſtruct the Husbandmen and Farmers in the Chriſtian Religion, he doth it by the Parable of a Sower; and elſewhere, by that

of

of the Wheat and the Tares, merely to plough up the fallow Ground of their Hearts to receive the Seed of Divine Grace; and by the Knowledg of the difference of Soil and Improvement of Ground, they might increase in the Knowledg of more heavenly Things. And this will lead me,

Secondly, To the Explication of this Parable, and to shew the mystical and spiritual Sense of it, as it is here expounded by our Saviour: but before I do that, I must take notice of that pathetical Admonition, with which he closes the literal, and introduces the spiritual Sense of this Parable, in these words; *And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear.* Which words are a Call, to excite their Attention to what he had farther to say to them, and to imprint these Truths in their Understanding and Memories. Whereupon the Disciples asked him, saying, *What might this Parable be?* By which they enquir'd into the Sense and Meaning of the Parable. In answering of which Question, Christ first minds them of a particular Privilege granted them above others: *Unto you it is given to know the Mysteries of the Kingdom of God*, so as to have them made plain and clear to you; *but to others in Parables*, not expounded to them, whereby they are left in the dark; that according to the Prophecy of *Isaias*, *In seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.*

And having premis'd this, he proceeds to unfold to them the Parable: *Now the Parable* (saith he) *is this*; *The Seed is the Word of God*, sown in the Field of his Church; where Christ, the great Husband-man, sends forth his Ministers to sow the Seed of sound Doctrine in his Church, and likewise to plant and water it; leaving the Increase to his Blessing, who is alone able to give it.

Those by the Way-side, are they that hear: then cometh the Devil and taketh the Word out of their Hearts, lest they should believe, and be saved. When any one heareth the Word of the Kingdom (saith St. *Matthew*) and understandeth it not; that is, as the Word in the Original signifies, layeth it not to heart, not seriously minding or meditating upon it, so as it may sink deep enough to take root within them; these suffer Satan, the Wicked one, to catch away that which was sown in their Hearts; like Seed lying upon the Surface of the Earth, the Evil one cometh and picketh it away, as

Birds

Birds do Corn, by the Way-ſide; and ſo they neither beleeve nor are ſav'd by it. Of this ſort of Hearers we have too many in our Days, who receive the Word in at one Ear, and let it out at the other.

They on the Rock are they, which when they hear, receive the Word with Joy; and theſe have no Root, which for a while believe, and in time of Temptation fall away. The Seed ſown on ſtony Ground, was the Word preach'd to obſtinate and obdurate Hearts, which tho they ſeem'd to receive it a while with ſome kind of Joy, conceiving no ſmall Delight either in the Novelty of the Matter, or the Neatneſs of the Compoſure, or the Fineneſs of the Delivery: yet theſe things going no farther than the Ear, without ever entring or piercing into the Heart, leave no Impreſſion behind them; and whenever any Trouble or Difficulty ariſes in their Duty, they preſently forget, forſake, and fall away from it. And of this kind of Auditors our Age likewiſe affords too many.

That which fell among Thorns are they, which when they have heard, go forth, and are choak'd with the Cares, and Riches, and Pleaſures of this Life, and bring no Fruit to Perfection. The ſowing of Seed among Thorns, denotes the Preaching the Goſpel to ſuch as give it indeed the Hearing; but by and by go away with Hearts ſo charg'd with the Cares and Concerns of this Life, where the Word ſhould enter, that it can find no admiſſion or abiding there; their great Sollicitude about the Honours, Profits, and Pleaſures of the World, utterly ſtifles and ſmothers the Word, that it can have no good effect them: *They come indeed* (ſaith God) *and ſit before me as my People*, willing to hear and learn from me; but *their Heart is all the while after their Covetouſneſs*; ſaying, *When will the new Moon be gone, that we may ſell Corn; and the Sabbath be over, that we may ſet forth Wheat? making the Ephah ſmall, and the Shekel great, falſifying the Ballance with Deceit*; Amos 8. 5. Of ſuch Worldlings as theſe do many Congregations mainly conſiſt, who hear the Word, but the Cares of the World, and the Deceitfulneſs of Riches ſo choak it, that they *become unfruitful, and bring no Fruit to perfection.* Which Expreſſion relates to ſome ſort of Fruits, that hold not out to the proper time of ripening, but are blighted and fall off before the Harveſt.

But that on the good Ground (which are the laſt, and to be feared the leaſt of Hearers) *are they, which in an honeſt and good*

good Heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth Fruit with Patience. These receiving the Word into well-meaning and true Hearts, it takes firm Root there, and after springs up in the Fruits of Holiness towards God, of Righteousness towards Men, and of Temperance, Chastity, and Contentment towards our selves; all which it brings forth with Patience and Perseverance to the End, without swerving or falling from them.

This is briefly the Parable and the Explication of it, appointed for the Gospel for this Day; by which it appears, that of the four sorts of Soil, there was but one that came to Good; and that gives to understand, that three to one of the Hearers miscarried: this was great odds, and 'twere to be wish'd, that the odds in our Days may not prove greater. And the Fault of all this lies chiefly in the Hearing. Which will lead me in the

Last place, to the Use and Application we are to make of this Parable; and that will consist mainly in directing us about the Matter and Manner of our Hearing. St. *Mark* relating this same Parable, infers from it a Caution concerning the Matter, saying, *Take heed therefore what ye hear*, Mark 4. 24. St. *Luke* here from this Parable infers a Caution concerning the Manner of Hearing; *Take heed therefore how ye hear*, Ver. 18. Both which must be a little consider'd.

1st then, To perform this Duty of Hearing aright, we must look to the Matter, and take heed what we hear, that we be not impos'd upon by false Teachers, who would turn our Ears from the Truth, and turn them unto Fables; but hearken only to sound Doctrine, and keep to the words of Truth and Soberness. To this end, care must be taken of the Persons whom we hear, that they be duly qualify'd and authoriz'd to teach; and that we *heap not to our selves Teachers, having itching Ears*; for such will mislead us into Errors and Heresies, and so turn to great Ungodliness. Again, care is to be taken of the Places where we hear; Christ and his Apostles went to the Temple and the Synagogues, the Places dedicated and set apart for Publick Worship; they were Seducers and false Teachers that crept into Houses, to lead captive silly Women, laden with divers Lusts. But chiefly, care must be had of the Matter, what we hear, that it be sound and orthodox; which the Apostle compares to *Gold and Silver, and pre-*

cious Stones; not Errors and Diviſions, which he reſembles to *Wood, Hay and Stubble, built upon the Foundation of Chriſtianity*, which cannot ſtand the Trial; 1 *Cor.* 3. 12. Now to preſerve ſound Doctrine, and to guide our ſelves aright, as to the Matter of Hearing, we muſt (as the Apoſtle directs) *hold faſt the Form of ſound Words deliver'd to us* in Faith and Truth, 2 *Tim.* 1. 13. that is, we muſt keep cloſe to the antient Creeds and Confeſſions of the Catholick Church, which are the Standard of Truth, and the Touchſtone of ſound Doctrine; that we may not be like Children, toſs'd to and fro with every Wind of Doctrine, by the cunning Craftineſs of thoſe that lie in wait to deceive.

And becauſe the too great Liberty of preaching and propheſying hath bred much Confuſion, and encourag'd many to ſtrive about Words, to no other purpoſe than to the Subverſion of the Hearers; it would not be amiſs, if for the preventing of Errors, and the preſerving of ſound Doctrine, the whole Subſtance of Religion were compriz'd in certain Sermons or Forms of Preaching, to be us'd and kept to by thoſe that are to inſtruct the People, that they may not be carried about with divers and ſtrange Doctrines, to the great Diſturbance of the Church, and the greater Peril of Mens Souls. This for the Matter of this Duty, *What we are to hear.* The

Second Caution is for the Manner of it, *How we are to hear.* This is likewiſe to be carefully heeded; for tho we ſhould be right in the Matter we hear, yet if we offend in the Manner of Hearing, we ſhall reap no Benefit by it. To hear aright then, we muſt,

1*ſt*, Hearken with Diligence and Attention, receiving it not as the Word of Man, but of God; not ſleeping or talking, or paſſing it away as an idle Tale, but diligently attending and liſtning to it as to the Words of Eternal Life. There is no greater ſign of the Contempt of any Perſon, than the ſlighting of his Words, and diſregarding what he ſays: and conſequently a drouſy and careleſs Behaviour in the Church of God, is a plain Contempt of him, and a caſting his Word behind our back.

2*dly*, We are to hear the Word of God with Fear and Reverence, conſidering the Greatneſs of the Majeſty in whoſe Preſence we are, and whoſe Word is deliver'd to us: *God is greatly to be feared* (ſaith the Pſalmiſt) *in the Aſſemblies of the Saints, and to be had in Reverence of all*

that

that draw nigh unto him; Pſal. 89. 7. We are to poſſeſs our Minds with awful Apprehenſions of him, and to compoſe our Bodies into all the decent Poſtures of Reverence and Adoration: This is *Solomon*'s Advice, *Eccleſ.* 5. 1. *Keep thy Foot when thou goeſt to the Houſe of God, and be more ready to hear than to offer the Sacrifice of Fools, for they conſider not that they do Evil.*

3*dly*, We muſt hear the Word of God with Underſtanding and Faith, endeavouring to know it aright, and yielding a firm and unſhaken Aſſent to it. We read, that the Goſpel preach'd to the *Jews*, *did not profit them, becauſe it was not mix'd with Faith in them that heard it*; Heb. 4. 2. They that will not rightly underſtand, nor firmly believe the Word of God deliver'd to them, will rather be the worſe than the better for it. The cleareſt Light can give no Direction, if it be ſhut up in a Cloud, or impriſon'd in a dark Lanthorn; neither can the brighteſt Light of Divine Truths be of any uſe, where it ſhines not into the Soul, or is with-held in Unrighteouſneſs: the beſt Food can afford no Nouriſhment, where it is not receiv'd or digeſted; nor can the Food of God's Word nouriſh the Soul to eternal Life, unleſs it be receiv'd and digeſted by Faith.

4*thly*, We muſt hear the Word of God with Meekneſs and Humility. So St. *James* exhorts us, *to receive with Meekneſs the ingrafted Word, that is able to ſave our Souls*; James 1. 21. where he intimates, that the kindly receiving of God's Word will ingraft it upon the Stock of our corrupt Nature, and make it grow and fructify, to the ſaving of our Souls. St. *Peter* wills us, *as new-born Babes, to deſire the ſincere Milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby*; 1 Pet. 2. 2. that is, to ſuck in the pure Nouriſhment of the Word with the Simplicity of Infants; that we may increaſe in Chriſtianity, and grow up to the Fulneſs of the Stature of Men in Chriſt Jeſus. *The Meek will he guide in Judgment* (ſaith the Pſalmiſt) *and the Humble he will teach his Way.* Theſe come without Pride and Prejudice, and with honeſt Deſires of knowing their Duty; and God delights to meet and communicate his Mind to ſuch: whereas he beholdeth the Proud afar off, and leaves them ſo to their own Vanity and Prejudices, that in *hearing they ſhall hear, but not underſtand*; *and in ſeeing they ſhall ſee, but not perceive.*

5*thly*, We muſt hear the Word of God with an inward Love and Delight in it; ſaying with holy *David*, *O how I love thy Law! 'tis my Meditation Day and Night.* Not

with thoſe in *Malachi*, *What a Wearineſs is it?* When will the Sabbath be over, and the Sermon ended, that we may return to our worldly Buſineſs? As if it were a Burden to hear God ſpeaking to them, and an irkſom thing to attend his Service. They that can find no Pleaſure in hearing the Word, will find but little profit by it: to ſuch the Holy Scripture becomes not only a dead, but a killing Letter; and the Word preach'd proves rather a Savour of Death than Life. They that receiv'd not the *Truth in the love of it*, were given up *to believe a Lye, and carried away with ſtrong Deluſions*; 2 Theſſ. 2. 10, 11. And ſuch as are cold or lukewarm in their Duty, coming to Church more from Cuſtom and Formality, than any true Love or Deſire of Edification; inſtead of being accepted of God, will be ſpued out of his Mouth.

Laſtly, To hear the Word aright, we muſt add Doing to our Hearing; for not the Hearers, but the Doers of the Word ſhall be juſtified. We muſt obey from the Heart the Form of Doctrine deliver'd to us. 'Tis Practice that is the Life of our Profeſſion, and can alone give the Efficacy, and anſwer the End of all our Hearing. In ſhort, we are ſo to hear, as to edify in Knowledg, to be built up in our moſt holy Faith, and to bring forth the Fruits of a holy Life; without this, all our Hearing will be to no purpoſe, and the many Sermons we have heard will riſe up in Judgment againſt us, to our greater Condemnation: ſo that as the evil Servant was judged out of his own Mouth, ſo will the careleſs Hearer be out of his own Ears.

Thus we ſee both what, and how we are to hear, of both which we are concern'd to take heed, that we fail not in either: For it will be to no purpoſe how we hear, unleſs we hear what we ſhould; and 'twill be to as little purpoſe to hear what we ſhould, if we care not how we hear it. So that great heed is to be taken, both as to the Matter and Manner of Hearing; that we hear nothing but ſound Doctrine, and with Hearts prepar'd to receive and practiſe it. This we ſhould the rather do, becauſe of the Danger of miſcarrying in this Duty. We ſee, that of the four ſorts of Ground, wherein the Seed of God's Word is ſown, there is but one that receives Benefit and fructifies by it; the generality of Hearers coming to Church, more to ſee and meet their Neighbours for other ſecular Ends, than to learn their Duty, and be edified by it. When the good Seed is ſown,

the Enemy is ever awake to ſow his Tares of Errors and Diviſions while we ſleep; and the Devil is always ready to take the Word out of our Hearts, that it may bring no Fruit to Perfection: The Thorns and Briars of worldly Cares are apt to choak the Word, and render it unprofitable; falſe Teachers are buſy to inſtil their Poiſon, and our own corrupt Hearts are too ready to receive it. Let us therefore look about us, leſt the good Seed of Divine Truths go no farther than our Ears; and there, like looſe Corns in the Highway, are pick'd up by the Fowls of the Air; but let it ſink and take Root in the Heart, leſt, like Corn ſown on a Rock, it die away for lack of Moiſture: Nor let the Thorns of worldly Cares and Troubles ſo ſtifle and choak the Word, that it come to nothing; but receiving it into honeſt and good Hearts, that meditate upon it, and apply it to our ſelves, and by Prayer beg a Bleſſing upon it, it may bring forth Fruit unto Holineſs here, and at laſt ripen into everlaſting Life: Which God grant, *&c.*

DISCOURSE XXXIX.

The EPISTLE for the Sunday call'd *Quinquageſima*, or the Sunday before *Lent*.

1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2, to the end.

Tho I ſpeak with the Tongues of Men and of Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as ſounding Braſs, or a tinkling Cymbal, &c. *Charity ſuffereth long, and is kind,* &c.

THE Collect for this Day minds us of our being taught, that all our Doings without Charity are nothing worth; and therefore prays for the Holy Ghoſt to pour into our Hearts that moſt excellent Gift of Charity, the very Bond of Peace and of all Vertues; without which whoſoever liveth, is counted dead before God

Now the Place where we are taught all this, is in the Epiſtle for this Day; where the Excellency, the Uſefulneſs, and the Comprehenſiveneſs of this Grace of Charity are largely ſet forth. And that is here done theſe four Ways:

Firſt, By preferring it above all the Gifts of the Spirit; from the 1ſt to the 4th Verſe.

Secondly, By deſcribing the Nature and Properties of it; from the 4th to the 8th Verſe.

Thirdly, By its perpetual and never-failing Duration; from the 8th to the 13th Verſe. And,

Fourthly, By preferring it above all other Graces of the Spirit, in the laſt Verſe. I ſhall ſpeak to all theſe in their Order, and conclude with an Exhortation to this excellent Grace.

I begin with the Preference of it before all the Gifts of the Spirit, in the three firſt Verſes; where it is prefer'd,

1*ſt*, Before the Gift of Tongues, in theſe words; *Though I ſpeak with the Tongues of Men and of Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as ſounding Braſs, or a tinkling Cymbal.* The Gift of Tongues was a neceſſary and uſeful Gift in the Beginning of Chriſtianity, for the propagating the Goſpel into the remote and dark Corners of the Earth; and therefore the Apoſtles and others were ſuper-naturally endow'd with it, to enable them to ſpeak to Men of all Nations and Languages, and declare to them in their ſeveral Tongues the wonderful Works of God: 'twas by this that we and all other Countries enjoy the Light of the Goſpel to this Day. Of this Gift St. *Paul* had a ſhare above the reſt of the Apoſtles; which made him ſay, that he ſpake with Tongues more than they all: and yet he declares, that all this without Charity, or a Deſire of edifying, is no better than the empty Noiſe of ſounding Braſs, or the fainting Melody of a tinkling Cymbal; meaning, that all the Charms of Human and Angelical Eloquence, the loftieſt Strains of Rhetorick, and all the Diverſity or Curioſity of Language, are nothing worth, if not directed by Charity, and accompany'd with a Deſire of doing Good. And therefore the Apoſtle tells us, that he had rather ſpeak five Words with his Underſtanding to edify others, than ten thouſand Words to no purpoſe.

2*dly*, Charity is prefer'd above the Gift of Prophecy, and the Knowledg of all Myſteries, in the next words; *Tho I have the Gift of Prophecy, and underſtand all Myſteries, and all Know-*

Knowledg, yet without Charity I am nothing: where by the Gift of Prophecy, and the Underſtanding of all Myſteries, and all Knowledg, may be meant the Power of predicting future Events, and the expounding the Holy Scriptures, as the Prophets did of old; or the Knowledg of the Myſteries of the Goſpel, as the Apoſtles and others have had ever ſince: In all which, the cleareſt Inſight and Underſtanding is of no avail, unleſs they are govern'd by this Grace, and directed to the Ends of Charity.

3*dly*, Charity is prefer'd above the Gift of Miracles, and that Faith by which they are done, in theſe words; *Tho I have all Faith, ſo that I could remove Mountains, and have no Charity, I am nothing:* where we are to underſtand the Faith of Miracles, deſcrib'd by the moving of Mountains, according to that of our Saviour; *If ye have Faith, you ſhall ſay unto this Mountain, Be thou remov'd and caſt into the midſt of the Sea, it ſhall be done*, Mat. 21. 21. And elſewhere, *To him that believeth, all things are poſſible.* And yet this wonder-working Faith, if not employ'd for the Good of others, will turn to no account; for tho the doing theſe great things might ſeem to make him ſomebody in the eyes of Men, yet in the ſight of God he is nothing.

4*thly*, Charity is prefer'd above the Gift of Alms-giving, in theſe words; *Tho I give all my Goods to feed the Poor, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing:* where you ſee that a Man may give very liberally to the Poor without Charity; as when 'tis done from Vanity and Oſtentation, or when it proceeds from a fooliſh Pity, tending more to the Encouragement of Idleneſs, than the promoting the publick or private Good; in which caſes 'tis rather Profuſeneſs than Charity, and wanting the true Principles of the Love of God and our Neighbour, becomes a fruitleſs Gift, and profiteth nothing.

Laſtly, Charity is here prefer'd before Martyrdom it ſelf, in theſe words; *Tho I give my Body to be burnt, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing:* by which it appears, that ſome Men may ſeem to be Martyrs, and to ſuffer and die for Religion, and yet be void of all true Charity. For ſome out of Wearineſs of Life have made away themſelves, as Self-Murderers; ſome again, for their Obſtinacy in Hereſies and Blaſphemies, have been burnt at the Stake, as Atheiſts and Hereticks; others have too eaſily parted with their Lives out of Vain-glory and Revenge: All which wanting the true Principle of the Love of God and themſelves, have miſs'd the Crown of Martyrdom, and reap'd nothing but Shame and

Misery. So that Charity is here advanc'd far above all other Gifts of the Spirit, which receive all their Excellency and Usefulness from it, and without it are altogether vain and unprofitable.

But because some have confin'd Charity only to giving to the Poor, which is the least part of it, and may be done without it; the Apostle proceeds in the following Verses to shew the Nature of this Vertue, and to describe it in the several Branches and Properties of it. As,

1*st*, *Charity suffereth long*, and beareth a great while with the Follies and Frailties of Mankind; and so 'tis oppos'd to that Hastiness of Spirit, that makes Men break out into sudden and rash Anger, and provokes them to Revenge, and the returning of all the Evil done to them: whereas the Charity that suffers long, teaches them better to govern their Passions, not to catch Fire at every Spark, nor to be inflam'd at every little Unkindness or Trespass done to them; but to be willing to overlook many Failings, to forgive lesser Injuries, and never to return any. This is the Long-suffering so often mention'd and requir'd in Scripture, which consists in forgiving and forbearing one another in Love; of which God hath given us his own Example, in passing by many daily Trespasses and Provocations, and hath commanded us to do the same. He that can defer his Anger, and put off the righting himself for every little Affront or Trespass; he that can long bear with the Failures and Miscarriages of others, as easily as we overlook the Mistakes and Misdemeanors of those whom we entirely love: such a one is possess'd with this excellent Grace of Charity. But he that is soon angry, that cannot forgive, but is still meditating Revenge upon every occasion; such a one hath not made one step to the attaining of this Vertue: for *Charity suffers long*, and is more ready to receive another, than revenge a former Wrong.

2*dly*, *Charity is kind*; that is, it not only bears with much Evil, but is ever ready to do all manner of Good: and that to the Bodies of Men, by relieving them in Cases of unavoidable Want and Necessity; to their Souls, by comforting, counselling and wishing their Salvation; to their Goods and Estates, by assisting and promoting, as far as they may, their Welfare and Prosperity; to their good Names, by giving them their just Praises, and not denying them the Honour due to their Places and Merits. They that do these things, have learnt

learnt and practis'd this Act and Office of Charity; but they that do otherwise, are far from it: for *Charity is kind.*

3*dly*, *Charity envieth not*; that is, it is not griev'd or gall'd at another's Prosperity, but rather rejoices than repines at it. Some Men, if another excel them in Parts, Power, or Preferment, fret and grow uneasy; complaining of their own, and murmuring at another's Condition, which they think and find to be better than theirs. This is an evil and envious Spirit, and shews them to be destitute of the Grace of Charity: for that *envies not.*

4*thly*, *Charity vaunteth not it self*; that is, it doth nothing out of Vain-glory and Ostentation, to be seen of Men, to gain their Applause, or to be thought somebody. This was the Fault of the *Pharisees* of old, who in all their good Works courted only the Honour and Praise of Men: If they gave Alms, they sounded a Trumpet to call others to see and observe their Charity; if they pray'd, they lifted up their Voice like a Trumpet, that others might hear and admire their Devotion; if they fasted, they disfigur'd their Faces, and put on a dejected Countenance, that they might appear unto Men to fast; and in all that they did, they sought more the Honour that cometh from Men, than the Glory of God. And this Vanity reigns in too many still, who aim more at their own Glory, than the Good of others in what they do. Now they that act thus from a Principle of Vain-glory, are far from Charity: for that *vaunteth not it self.*

5*thly*, *Charity is not puffed up*; that is, 'tis free from Pride, and keeps the Mind from swelling, or being lifted up with a vain Opinion of its own Perfections; so that neither Wealth nor Wisdom, neither Power or Preferment, nor any real or imaginary Excellency, can make the good Man think more highly of himself than he ought to think: But Charity corrects all such Tumors and Swellings of the Mind, and makes it think soberly, according as God hath given to every one the Measure of Faith. *Knowledg* indeed *puffeth up*, and makes Men vain and proud of a little; *but Charity edifieth*, and keeps them humble and lowly. *He whose Heart is lifted up* (saith the Prophet) *is not upright in him*; Hab. 2. 4. Such a one is void of the Grace of Charity; for that *is not puffed up.*

6*thly*, *Charity doth not behave it self unseemly*; the Word in the Original is οὐκ ἀσχημονεῖ, which signifies to act out of order, to leave the Rule, and to do things out of sorts: It refers to a Rule mention'd in the Close of the foregoing Chapter;

ter; where 'tis requir'd that all things be done decently and in order. In the Original it is εὐσχημόνως, which implies an orderly Form and Figure of Action, and to do all things in a due Decorum; to do otherwise, is ἀσχημονεῖν, to behave our ſelves unſeemly, which our Apoſtle tells us, that Charity carefully avoids: to which end, it conſiders the ſeveral Stations and Conditions wherein Men are plac'd, as Superiors, Inferiors and Equals; and teaches Men to demean themſelves ſuitably and becomingly towards each: that is, to order themſelves lowly and reverently to all their Betters in Place and Office; to be affable and courteous to thoſe of the ſame Rank and Degree with themſelves; and to ſhew Candour and Condeſcenſion to thoſe that are beneath them. This is the ſeemly Behaviour which this Vertue directs and keeps to; ſo that they who are arrogant, inſolent and unmannerly, are deſtitute of Charity: for that doth not *behave it ſelf unſeemly.*

7thly, *Charity ſeeketh not her own*; that is, not indirectly or inordinately: it is not ſo immoderately addicted to its own Intereſt, as to caſt off all Regard of others, or to purſue it by any unjuſt or unlawful Means. In this ſenſe it is, that the Apoſtle ſpeaks, 1 Cor. 10. 24. *Let no Man ſeek his own, but every Man another's Wealth.* There are ſome of that narrow and ſelfiſh Spirit, as to care for none but themſelves; and if they can but live in Eaſe and Plenty, regard not what becomes of any other. This is ſo contrary to this Grace of Charity, that it cannot reſide where this ſelfiſh Spirit reigns: and ſo it does in the Breaſts of all ſuch, as ſeek their own private Intereſt, before, above, and to the prejudice of the Publick, and ſtudy to enrich themſelves from the Spoils of others. Theſe are they of whom the Apoſtle complains, ſaying, *All Men ſeek their own, and few the things of others*, Phil. 2. 20, 21. They that do ſo, are utterly void of this Grace; for Charity does not confine our Kindneſs to our ſelves, but enlarges the Heart, and extends it as far as poſſible to the Good of all Mankind: *Charity ſeeketh not her own.*

8thly, *Charity is not eaſily provoked*, οὐ παροξύνεται; the word ſignifies not ſo much an Eaſineſs, as an Exceſs of Paſſion, the Paroxyſms and extravagant Heights of Anger, when it tranſgreſſes the Bounds of Reaſon and Religion, and runs into Rage and Impatience: and ſo the word ſhould be tranſlated, not being eaſily provok'd; for that is imply'd in the firſt Property of Charity, it *ſuffers long*; that is, is not eaſily mov'd

to

to any haſty or ſudden Paſſion, or ſoon provok'd to Revenge: but here, to diſtinguiſh it from that, it ſhould be render'd, it is not highly provok'd, nor riſes above the due Meaſures; for ſo the original Word imports. 'Tis indeed as lawful to be angry, as 'tis to love, to rejoice, or exerciſe any other Paſſion. So the Apoſtle intimates, that we may be angry and ſin not; but care muſt be taken that it riſe not too high, and that it laſt not too long: our Blood muſt not boil up or break out into Fury, nor muſt the Sun go down upon our Wrath; for that is to give place unto the Devil, to loſe the Uſe of our Reaſon and Underſtanding, and to ſuffer the Beaſt to ride the Man. So this Act or Office of Charity directs, not to be tranſported with Rage and Fury, but to keep our Paſſions within due Bounds: for *Charity is not too highly provoked.*

9*thly*, *Charity thinketh no Evil*; that is, it hath no evil Deſigns upon any, nor doth it imagine or contrive any Miſchief or Trouble to them. *Love worketh no Ill to his Neighbour*, as the ſame Apoſtle ſpeaks elſewhere: it worketh it not either by the Head, or by the Hand, but ſtudies to do all the Good it can by both. Moreover, Charity thinketh no Evil; *i. e.* it is not jealous or ſuſpicious, nor ſeeks to blaſt the Credit of other Mens Actions or Reputations by any evil Surmiſes, miſjudging the Principle, Motive or End of their Actions, or making bad Conſtructions of what they ſay or do: all that do ſo, are deſtitute of this Grace of Charity; for that neither doth nor *thinketh any Evil.*

10*thly*, *Charity rejoiceth not in Iniquity*: by which is meant, that a good Man takes no pleaſure in the Sins or Afflictions of any other, contrary to the inhuman Diſpoſition and Demeanour of ſuch as have a ſecret Delight in the Misfortunes and Miſcarriages of others, and ſport themſelves in their Follies and Impieties. Whereas Charity conceives a Sorrow and Trouble at ſuch Failings; it aſſiſts them with Prayers, Counſels and Reproofs, and rather laments than laughs at the Evils that befal them: *It rejoiceth not in Iniquity*;

But *rejoiceth in the Truth*: It is glad when any falſe Accuſation is detected, and the Truth of things is made to appear: contrary to the wicked Temper and Practice of ſuch, as make Lyes their Refuge, and delight in ſlandering and ſpeaking all manner of Evil one of another. Whereas Charity is pleas'd in hearing well of other Men, and rejoices with them, whoſe good Names are vindicated from falſe Aſperſions.

11*thly*,

11thly, *Charity beareth all things*, πάντα στέγει; it covereth all things, ſo the Word ſignifies: it refers to Silence, and holding the peace, where we are not call'd upon to ſpeak; and ſignifies Charity to be ſo far from joying in another's Faults or Infirmities, that it conceals all Ill of another, where it is not greater Charity to reveal it. *Solomon* tells us, that *Love covereth all Sins*, Prov. 10. 12. and the Apoſtle, that *Charity covereth a Multitude of Sins*. It caſts a Veil of Silence over them, and rather hides than diſcloſes another's Nakedneſs.

12thly, *Charity believeth all things*; that is, all things that are ſaid for the excuſe or mitigation of a Fault: It is ſo far from aggravating any Evil, that it excuſes all it may, and is willing to believe all the Good it can of other Men: it doth not leſſen any Man's Worth, nor is it uneaſy under any Man's Commendation, as too many are wont to be, but rather adds to than detracts from any: it puts the moſt favourable Conſtruction that may be upon all things, and believes the beſt it can of all Perſons.

13thly, *Charity hopeth all things*; that is, where little or nothing is ſaid in defence or mitigation, yet ſtill it hopes the beſt that the Matter is capable of: 'Tis pleas'd with the Good it finds in any, and waits for the Amendment of the Bad, and will not deſpair of the Worſt. There are many Examples of great Sinners, that are become great Saints; and whilſt the Gates of Mercy are open to all Men, Charity will not ſhut the Door of Hope againſt any, much leſs will it deſpair of their Salvation, or doom any to eternal Damnation: It will not judg of their final State, nor condemn any before the time; but extends its Hope, as God doth *his Mercy, over all his Works*.

Laſtly, *Charity endureth all things*; that is, it is not weary of uſing all good Means to reclaim them, tho to its own prejudice: It is not diſcourag'd at any Difficulties for the Good of others, and much leſs in the Cauſe of Chriſt; but undergoes any thing with Patience and Magnanimity for his ſake: it faints not under Tribulation, but rather glories in the Croſs, than ſinks under it; and is ſo far from repining, that it rejoices in Afflictions in Chriſt's Service, knowing, that *if we ſuffer with him, we ſhall be glorify'd together*. This is the Nature, and theſe are the Properties of Charity; the Excellence whereof the Apoſtle proceeds farther to repreſent,

Thirdly,

Thirdly, By its perpetual and never-ceaſing Duration; *Charity* (ſaith he) *never faileth.* It hath Eternity ſtamp'd upon it; it will abide with us here, and go along with us hereafter; 'twill accompany us to Heaven, and there make up the greateſt part of our Felicity. *But whether there be Prophecies, they ſhall fail*; for when they are fulfill'd, they are at an end: *Whether there be Tongues, they ſhall ceaſe*; when they have done their Work, and deliver'd their Meſſage, they will be ſilenc'd: *Whether there be Knowledg, it ſhall vaniſh away.* The imperfect Knowledg we have of things here, will vaniſh and be ſwallow'd up in the Abyſs of greater Perfections: *For we know in part now, and propheſy in part*, and our beſt Gifts are attended with Imperfection; *But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part ſhall be done away*: in that perfect State to which Charity leads, all theſe imperfect Gifts will be of no uſe, and ſhall for ever ceaſe. This the Apoſtle illuſtrates by the difference between Childhood and Manhood: *When I was a Child* (ſaith he) *I ſpake as a Child, I underſtood as a Child, I thought as a Child; but when I became a Man, I put away childiſh Things.* In our firſt Years our Apprehenſions of things are weak and childiſh; but when we come to be Men, our Words, Actions and Inclinations are more manly; inſomuch that we ſpeak, act and underſtand much better than we did before: ſuch and much greater will be the difference between our Condition in this Life and the next; for *now we ſee thro a Glaſs darkly, but then Face to Face; now I know in part, but then ſhall I know even as alſo I am known.* Here the Images of things are but faintly repreſented to us, and we have only a Glimpſe of them as thro a Glaſs darkly; but then we ſhall have more bright and lively Repreſentations of them, and behold them Face to Face: then all Imperfection will be done away, and we ſhall know God, even as we are known.

Laſtly, The Apoſtle prefers Charity not only above all the Gifts, but above all the Graces of the Spirit; ſaying in the Cloſe, *Now abideth Faith, Hope and Charity; but the greateſt of theſe is Charity.* Faith and Hope, tho excellent Graces, are yet ſuited only to this preſent State, and will both end with this Life; for Faith, which is the Evidence of things not ſeen, will e'er long yield to Viſion; and Hope, which is the Expectation of good things to come, will ſhortly ceaſe, and be ſwallow'd up in Fruition: Whereas Charity, which

conſiſts

consists in the Love of God and our Brother, will follow us to Heaven; and there not only remain, but reign in our Breasts for ever.

Thus we see the Nature and Properties of this Divine and Excellent Grace of Charity; which, if we set down and consider, we shall see great cause to lament the lack of it in the World: for if we review the sundry Properties of it before-mention'd, and compare them with the Practice of Mens Lives, we shall find reason enough to complain, that the Love of many is waxen cold; and what our Saviour said of Faith, may be truly affirm'd of Charity, that when the Son of Man cometh, he will scarce find Charity in the Earth. The Scarcity, as well as the Excellency of which Grace, should teach us to hearken to that Exhortation of the Apostle, 1 *Pet.* 4. 8. *Above all things have fervent Charity among your selves*; for Charity will not only cover a Multitude of Sins in others, but likewise hide a Multitude of our own; it will draw the Kindness of Heaven upon us, when we are ready to extend it to others: And therefore St. *Paul* in another place exhorts to the same purpose; *Above all things put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfectness*, to fasten all other Graces upon the Soul: *Col.* 3. 14. In a word, it will establish our Hearts with Grace here, and hereafter bring us to Glory: Which God grant, *&c.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE XL.

The GOSPEL for the Sunday call'd *Quinquageſima*, or the next Sunday before *Lent*.

Luke xviii. 31, to the end.

Then Jeſus took unto him the Twelve, and ſaid unto them, Behold we go up to Jeruſalem, *and all things that are written by the Prophets concerning the Son of Man, ſhall be accompliſh'd,* &c.

THIS Goſpel for the Day conſiſts of two Parts: the *firſt* contains an Account of Chriſt's going up to *Jeruſalem*, and there firſt acquainting his Apoſtles with his approaching Death, Paſſion and Reſurrection, with the Circumſtances of each. The *Second* contains his going from *Jeruſalem* to *Jericho*, and in the way curing a blind Man, reſtoring his Sight to him by a word's ſpeaking: of each of which particularly.

And, *Firſt*, Of our Saviour's going up to *Jeruſalem*, together with the End and Deſign of it. Of this, the Beginning of the Goſpel will inform us; *Then Jeſus took unto him the twelve, and ſaid unto them, Behold we go up to* Jeruſalem, *and all things that are written by the Prophets concerning the Son of Man ſhall be accompliſh'd.* Where Jeſus aſſembled the Apoſtles, to impart ſomething of great weight and conſequence to them; which was to acquaint them with his approaching Sufferings, and to prepare them for them: *Behold* (ſaith he) *we are going up to* Jeruſalem, perhaps at one of the great and ſolemn Feſtivals, when all the Males were requir'd yearly to repair thither, to worſhip and offer Sacrifice. When we come there (ſaith he) *all things that are written by the Prophets of the Son of Man ſhall be accompliſh'd*; meaning, that all the Sufferings which were foretold by the Prophets concerning the Meſſiah, ſhould come to paſs and be fulfill'd in him. That the Meſſiah was

to

to ſuffer, and die, and riſe again, was plainly foretold by many of the Prophets. The Prophet *Iſaiah* relates his Sufferings ſo fully and particularly, that his Account of them ſeems rather a Hiſtory of ſomething that was paſt, than a Prophecy of what was to come; as we ſee, *Chap.* 53. where he is ſaid to be *deſpis'd and rejected of Men*, which was verify'd in his own Country-men the *Jews*, who deſpis'd and rejected him, and pour'd all manner of Contempt upon him. Moreover, he is ſtil'd there *a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief*; as if all kinds of Evil and Trouble were familiar and ordinary with him. The following Verſes of that Chapter ſpeak of his being *wounded and bruiſed, oppreſſed, afflicted*; and at laſt of *his being cut off from the Land of the Living*. And the ſame was foretold by *Daniel*, Chap. 9. And therefore St. *Paul*, in his Defence of this Doctrine, told *Agrippa*, That *he ſaid none other things than thoſe, which* Moſes *and the Prophets did ſay ſhould come, that Chriſt ſhould ſuffer*; Acts 26. 22, 23. Of theſe Sufferings, Chriſt began to inform his Diſciples, to prevent Surprize, that they might not be ſtartled and offended, when they came. And this he did the rather, becauſe his Sufferings were then drawing on, and his Death was not far off. He knew how difficult a thing it would be to adhere to a crucify'd Saviour, and to expect eternal Life from one that ſuffer'd ſo barbarous and ignominious a Death. He was aware how theſe things might be apt to ſhake their Faith, and undermine their Hopes in him; and therefore he thought fit to arm them before-hand againſt theſe things, by giving them a particular Account of his Death and Reſurrection: the Circumſtances whereof he tells them in the following Verſes, *viz.* that he ſhould *be deliver'd unto the* Gentiles; that he ſhould *be mocked and ſpitefully entreated, and ſpit on*; that they ſhould *ſcourge him and put him to death, and the third Day he ſhould riſe again.*

For his Delivery unto the Gentiles, or Heathens, that was fulfill'd by his Delivery to the *Roman* Power; for St. *Matthew* tells us, he was firſt betray'd by *Judas* to the chief Prieſts and Elders, and they deliver'd him to *Pontius Pilate*, the *Roman* Governour.

For his being mock'd, the ſame Evangeliſt tells us, how they platted a Crown of Thorns for him, ſetting it on his Head; and inſtead of a Scepter put a Reed into his right Hand, and then wagging their Heads in mockery, ſaid to the Multitude, *Hail King of the* Jews! as we read, *Mat.* 27.

For

For his being *spitefully entreated and spit on*, that St. *Matthew* and the other Evangelists fully declare; how the *Jews* reproach'd him for all his Miracles, saying, *He sav'd others, himself he cannot save.* And as if he had been the vilest Miscreant upon Earth, the Multitude came about him, *and spit in his Face.*

For his being *scourg'd*, that always going among the *Romans* before Crucifixion, was likewise with the utmost Rigour executed upon him, as the same Evangelists declare.

For their *putting him to death*, that was the Death of the Cross, which of all the *Roman* ways of Execution, was the most painful and the most ignominious. These and greater Sufferings were by the Prophets foretold concerning the Messiah, all which he tells them, must be accomplish'd in him; and therefore he thought it expedient to tell them these things, before they came to pass, that when they should come to pass they might believe. He took them up to *Jerusalem* with him, there to break these matters to them, and to let them know, that that should be the Stage of his Sufferings, or the Place where this Tragedy was to be acted. *Bethlehem prælegit Nativitati, Hyerosolyman Passioni*; 'twas a Father's Observation, he chose *Bethlehem* a poor, obscure, and unfrequented Village, for his Birth; and *Jerusalem*, a rich, great, and populous City, for his Death. The former was to be private and without Pomp, the latter to be publick before a great Concourse of Spectators and Witnesses.

But because the News of these things might be apt to dismay his Disciples, and to beget in them the greatest Sorrow and Sadness; he adds, in the next words, something for their Comfort, by telling them of his Resurrection; saying, *And the third Day he shall rise again*: meaning, that when they should see him die, they should not be discourag'd, for the Grave should not hold him long, within three Days he would appear alive again, to the Joy of his Friends, and the Terrour of all his and their Enemies. Words full of Comfort, and fraught with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory.

But what Effect had this Discourse upon the Disciples, or how did these Words take? Why, that the next Verse will tell us: *And they understood none of these things; and this Saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things that were spoken*: that is, they did in no wise perceive the Sense or Meaning of what he had said unto them. The Evangelist here useth different Words, to express one and the self-

ſame thing; for he thought it not enough to ſay, *They underſtood none of theſe things*, but adds, that *this Saying was hid from them*; and farther yet, that *they knew not the things that were ſpoken*: which different Expreſſions ſet forth the Groſſneſs and Dulneſs of their Underſtandings, either that they could not conceive, or would not believe what he had told them; which made him elſewhere rebuke them, in theſe words: *O Fools, and ſlow of Heart to believe all that the Prophets have written! Ought not Chriſt to have ſuffer'd theſe things, and to enter into his Glory? And beginning at* Moſes, *and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himſelf*; Luke 24. 25, 26. Whether this Ignorance of theirs was natural or affected, *i. e.* whether it proceeded from Weakneſs or Wilfulneſs, is not here expreſs'd.

The firſt Expreſſion, that *they underſtood none of theſe things*, ſeems to aſcribe it to the Weakneſs or Slowneſs of their Underſtandings. The next, that *this Saying was hid from them*, looks like a judicial Blindneſs, like that mention'd elſewhere, that in ſeeing they ſhould ſee, but not perceive; and in hearing, they ſhould hear, but not underſtand: But this cannot well be imagin'd of the Apoſtles of Chriſt. The laſt Expreſſion may give us the beſt Light herein, *They knew not the things that were ſpoken*; that is, they knew them not at firſt hearing, till they were after explain'd to them, they knew them not ſo readily and ſo fully as they did after. This ſeems to agree with the Account given of St. *Peter* in this matter, *Mat.* 16. 21, 22. where we read, that when *Jeſus began to ſhew unto his Diſciples, how that he muſt go unto* Jeruſalem, *and ſuffer many things of the Elders, Chief Prieſts, and Scribes, and be kill'd and be rais'd again the third Day*; Peter *rebuk'd him, ſaying, Be it far from thee, Lord, this ſhall not be unto thee.* By which words it appears, that he underſtood nothing of the Nature, Neceſſity, or End of Chriſt's Sufferings; for if he had, he would not have ſaid, *Be that far from thee*, which alone could *bring us nigh unto God*; or God forbid that that ſhould happen unto thee, which God had decreed ſhould be for the Salvation of Mankind. Which Error of St. *Peter* made our Saviour ſharply rebuke him, ſaying, *Get thee behind me Satan, thou art an Offence unto me, for thou ſavoureſt not the things that be of God, but thoſe that be of Men*; thy Mind and Affections are ſtill groveling

ling upon the Earth, and are not yet rais'd to more heavenly Objects.

The Truth of this Matter was, that the Disciples had so possess'd their Minds with the Thoughts and Expectations of earthly Greatness, by the Coming of the Messiah, that they could not think or hear of Sufferings. This made him often speak of his own Sufferings, and of their taking up the Cross and following him, to wean them from all aspiring Thoughts, and to confute the Opinion they had entertain'd of his temporal Kingdom. When the Mother of *Zebedees* Children came to him, with her two Sons, desiring that the one might sit on his right Hand, and the other on his left, in his Kingdom, he told her, that she knew not what she ask'd; and thence took occasion to ask, whether they could drink of the Cup that he was to drink of, meaning the bitter Cup of his Passion, and be baptiz'd with the Baptism of Blood that he was to be baptiz'd with. If they could, they might meet with such things, as he did in this World; but for sitting at his right Hand or left, that belong'd only to such as shall be prepar'd for it by his Father in his Heavenly Kingdom: which things he said unto them, merely to take them off from all vain Conceits of worldly Greatness, and to let them know, that he came not to prefer them in this World, but in the next. And yet this false and foolish Notion of earthly Preferments by him, had got such a fast hold of the Minds even of the Apostles themselves, that 'twas a long time before they could rid themselves of it; for we find them after his Death thus bemoaning themselves, *We trusted that it had been he that should have redeem'd* Israel, *Luke* 24. 21. meaning, that they look'd to be freed by him from the *Roman* Yoke, and to be restor'd to their antient Liberty and Glory, of which his Death had cut off all their Hopes: yea, we find them, after his Resurrection from the Dead, asking of him, and saying, *Wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to* Israel? *Acts* 1. 6. so fond were they of worldly Prosperity, that their Minds seem'd to run upon little else. And this was the true reason, why when our Saviour told them of his approaching Sufferings, to prepare them for his Death, which was then at hand, they could not or would not understand any of those things. This is the first Part of the Gospel for this Day; from whence I proceed to the

Second, which contains our Saviour's going from *Jeruſalem* to *Jericho*, and in his way curing a blind Man, by reſtoring his Sight to him; an Account of which we have in the next Verſe to the end of the Chapter: it begins thus, *And it came to paſs, that as he was come nigh unto* Jericho, *a certain blind Man ſat by the way-ſide begging; and hearing the Multitude paſs by, he ask'd what it meant; and they told him, that Jeſus of* Nazareth *paſſeth by: and he cry'd, ſaying, Jeſus, thou Son of* David, *have mercy upon me.* St. *Matthew* relating this ſame Story, tells us of *two blind Men ſitting by the way-ſide begging, and hearing of Jeſus paſſing by, put up the ſame Petition, ſaying, Jeſus, thou Son of* David, *have mercy on us:* Mat. 20. 30. St. *Mark*, in relating of it, mentions but one, as St. *Luke* here does, and that his Name was *Bartimeus*, the Son of *Timeus*, known by the name of blind *Bartimeus*, Mark 10. 46. But however that be, it matters not much, Chriſt being as well able to cure two as one: They all agree in the Subſtance of the Story, that upon Jeſus's paſſing by, the blind Man cry'd out, *Jeſus, thou Son of* David, *have mercy on me; but they that were with him, or went before him, rebuk'd him, that he ſhould hold his peace*; fearing, that his frequent Crying might be unpleaſing to him: but inſtead of ſilencing, he cry'd ſo much the more, *Thou Son of* David, *have mercy on me.* Jeſus, taken with the Importunity and the Strength of his Faith, *ſtood ſtill, and commanded him to be brought unto him. When he was come near to him*, he ask'd him, ſaying, *What wilt thou that I ſhould do unto thee?* Very comfortable words to a poor Man! He reply'd unto him, *Lord, that I may receive my Sight.* Jeſus commiſerating the want of that uſeful Senſe, and the Miſeries of Blindneſs, ſaid unto him, *Receive thy Sight, thy Faith hath ſav'd thee:* Upon which words he *immediately receiv'd his Sight, and follow'd him, glorifying God.* So powerful is the Word of God, as to give Sight to the Blind, Feet to the Lame, yea, and Life to the Dead; and no wonder, for he that could ſpeak all things into Being by the Breath of his Mouth, may be eaſily ſuppos'd able to do ſuch inferiour things. St. *John* relates our Saviour's curing a blind Man, by anointing his Eyes with Clay and Spittle, things more likely to put out the Eyes, than to give Sight to them, to ſhew that God can work with any means, or no means; as it pleaſeth him, *John* 9. 6. But what was the Effect of this

this Miracle wrought on the blind Man? Why, a very good one, for he follow'd Christ, and glorify'd God. The opening his bodily Eyes, open'd the Eyes of his Understanding; and the curing his natural Blindness, heal'd the spiritual Blindness of his Mind: for he saw clearer into the things of God, which made him a Follower of Christ, and to give Glory to his Maker; *And all the People, when they saw it,* join'd with him in *giving Praise unto God.*

This is the Sum of the Gospel for this Day, which may teach us a few Lessons. And,

1*st*, From Christ's declaring his Sufferings beforehand, we may learn to count upon and prepare for Afflictions, which will come whilst we remain in this Vale of Misery. The Sting and Bitterness of any Affliction is Surprize, or its coming upon us unawares; for then it finds us naked and defenceless: but when we are forewarn'd, we are forearm'd against it, and may summon all the Succours of Reason and Religion to withstand or weaken it; and therefore we should, as the Mariners do, count upon a Storm in the midst of a Calm, to be the better provided for it when it comes.

2*ly*, From the Apostles Backwardness to believe our Saviour's Passion, we may learn our great Unwillingness to hear of or bear Afflictions. All Sufferings are against the grain of Nature, and give no small disturbance to it; which makes all Men naturally to decline and shrink from them. This mov'd our Saviour to acquaint his Disciples with his own and their Sufferings, that he was to drink of the bitter Cup of God's Wrath, which would not altogether pass from them, without tasting of it; for if any will be my Disciple (saith he) he must deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me. 'Tis thro many Tribulations that we are to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; and if we bear them patiently and thankfully, these light *Afflictions, that are but for a moment, will work out for us an exceeding and eternal weight of Glory*; 2 Cor. 4.

3*ly*, We learn from hence, that 'tis a too great Fondness and Love of this World that makes Men unwilling to hear of or bear the Sufferings of this Life. The *Jews* dreaming of the temporal Kingdom of the Messias, and expecting earthly Greatness and Preferments from him, made them despise a suffering Saviour; and the Disciples themselves, being a little tainted with that Itch of Ambition and world-

ly Hopes, made them uneasy under that melancholy Account that Christ gave of his approaching Death and Passion: Which should teach us to wean our Minds more and more from this World, and to fix them on the transcendent Joys and Happiness of the next; and then we shall find that the Sufferings of this present Life are not worthy to be nam'd or compar'd with the Glory that shall be reveal'd in us.

4*ly*, From Christ's curing the blind Man, that cry'd after him, we learn his Readiness to hear the Prayers of the Miserable and Afflicted: *The Poor crieth* (saith the Psalmist) *and the Lord heareth him, and delivereth him out of all his Trouble.* Whatever our Malady or Distress be, we see, if we have recourse unto God by earnest and importunate Prayer, we shall be heard and reliev'd; *The effectual fervent Prayer of the Righteous* (saith St. *James*) *prevaileth much.* Christ himself hath told us, that if we ask, we shall receive; and if we knock at the Gates of Mercy, they will be open'd us: but then we must ask in Faith, nothing wavering. 'Twas the blind Man's Faith that recover'd his Sight, so our Saviour told him, *Thy Faith hath sav'd thee*; and we must have the same Faith and Confidence in God, if we hope to be heard and succeed in our Petitions.

Lastly, From the blind Man's praising and glorifying God upon the Recovery of his Sight, we learn to give Thanks and Praise unto him for all the Mercies we receive; they all proceed from his Bounty, and therefore ought to be own'd and receiv'd with thankful Hearts: which should teach us, upon all occasions, to put up that pious and pithy Ejaculation, saying, *The Lord be prais'd.* Amen.

DIS-

DISCOURSE XLI.

The EPISTLE for the Firſt Day of *Lent*, commonly call'd *Aſh-Wedneſday.*

Joel ii. 12——18.

Turn ye even to me, ſaith the Lord, with all your Heart, and with Faſting, and with Weeping, and with Mourning: and rend your Hearts, and not your Garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious, &c.

THE Collect for this Day, which begins the Great Faſt of *Lent*, teaches us to pray to Almighty God, who hateth nothing that he hath made, but forgives the Sins of all that are penitent, to create and make in us new and contrite Hearts; that we worthily lamenting our Sins, and acknowledging our Wretchedneſs, may obtain of him, the God of all Mercy, perfect Remiſſion and Forgiveneſs. For the better obtaining of theſe Requeſts,

The Epiſtle for the Day contains a Call to the great Duties of Repentance, Faſting and Prayer, together with the Manner, the Motives, the End, and the Encouragements to the doing of them.

It begins with a Call to Repentance, in theſe words, *Turn ye even to me, ſaith the Lord.* Where the Prophet *Joel* brings in God Almighty ſummoning Sinners to return to him, from whom they had gone aſtray; for Returning ſuppoſes a Revolt, and few Perſons will think of returning, till they are ſenſible of their being out of the way. The Occaſion of this Call was from the ſore Judgments that had already befallen the *Jews*, and the Fears and Threatnings of many more; the Abuſe of their Plenty was puniſh'd with a Famine, and their Tranſgreſſions were threaten'd with the Fire and the Sword, and were like to bring the ſoreſt Judgments upon them. In this miſerable Con-

dition God is pleas'd to call them to Repentance, the only Remedy to remove their present Evils, and to prevent future and far greater Calamities. And this is expres'd here by turning unto God, that is, from the Love and Practice of Sin, to their Duty and Obedience to their Maker. For Sin is the cause of all Sufferings and Calamities, and we must eschew the one, before we can hope to escape the other. So our Saviour told the Paralytick, *Sin no more, lest a worse thing happen unto thee.* And because God is the sole Author of all Safety and Deliverance, we must not only turn from Sin, the Source of all Evil, but likewise turn unto God, the Fountain of all Good. And this turning from Sin must be universal, from all Sin, without the least reserve of kindness for any; and it must be constant, that is, always, without turning again to Folly.

But how are we to *turn unto God?* Why, the Manner of it is declar'd in the next words; it must be *with all our heart, and with Fasting, and with Weeping, and with Mourning*: Of each briefly. And,

1st, It must be with all the Heart; which denotes both the Sincerity of it, it must be with *the Heart*; and likewise the Integrity of it, with *all* the Heart. What comes from the Heart (you know) is sound and sincere; but what comes from the Lips only, is deceitful and hypocritical. Hence we find God Almighty complaining of some, that *drew nigh him with their Lips, when their Hearts were far from him*; *Isa.* 29. 13. And of others, that *came and sat before him as his People, when their Hearts were all the while after their Covetousness.* They seem'd to turn unto God by all the outward Signs of Piety and Devotion, but there was nothing within but Falshood and Hypocrisy. Such turning is but a mocking of God, and instead of turning away his Wrath, will but more highly increase and incense it. And therefore our turning to God must be with the Heart, to make it sincere, and likewise with all the Heart, to make it intire: it must not be shar'd between God and Mammon, he will have the whole Heart, not a piece; for tho he loves a broken, yet he hates a double and divided Heart. And therefore our Saviour wills us to *love the Lord our God with all our Heart, and with all our Soul, and with all our Strength.* By thus turning to him, he will turn unto us, and turn away his whole Displeasure from us.

Again,

Again, 2*dly*, Our turning to God must be *with Fasting*. This is a Duty frequently enjoin'd in Holy Scripture, and practis'd by holy Men in all Ages: 'tis mostly join'd with Prayer, and both together make a holy and acceptable Sacrifice; for upon the wings of Prayer and Fasting the Soul infallibly mounts up to Heaven. Fasting starves many a Vice, and so prevents much Evil; 'tis a great Instrument and Incentive to Vertue, and thereby procures much Good. It mightily helps our Devotion, by removing the Clogs and Hindrances of it; it subdues the Flesh to the Spirit, and by keeping under the Body, raises and elevates the Soul. We read, our Blessed Saviour fasted forty Days and forty Nights before his Combat with the Devil, *Mat.* 4. 2. from whose Example the Church appointed the *Lenten* Fast; which requires not a total Abstinence from all Meats, for that our Nature and the necessary Cravings of it cannot bear; but an Abstinence for some time from all high and pampering Food, to mortify the Flesh, that it may the better attend to the Motions of God's holy Spirit. Luxury and high Feeding made the prodigal Son wanton, and leave his Father's House; and nothing but Hunger and homely Diet made him to come to himself, and think of returning to his Father. And therefore Fasting is here requir'd of us, in order to our turning unto God.

3*dly*, We are call'd upon to turn unto God *with Weeping*: that is, with the Tears of godly Sorrow and Contrition, bewailing our Folly in going astray from him like lost Sheep, and seeking to repair it by a speedy returning to the great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls. The Sense of our Sins should draw Tears from our Eyes to wash off their Guilt, and to cleanse us from their Defilement. *Peter* wept bitterly for denying his Master, and the Prophet *Jeremy* wish'd his Eyes a Fountain of Tears. Not that actual Weeping is always absolutely necessary to Repentance or Salvation, for some by reason of the Dryness of their Constitution cannot shed Tears, when perhaps their Sorrow is the deeper for want of that Vent; but the meaning here is, that we be inwardly touch'd and afflicted with the Sense of our Misdoings, as those are that use to lament and cry for them: And if we are so, we may be said inwardly to weep and bleed, without shedding of Tears; and that will be as acceptable unto God, as the loudest Weeping and Wailing.

4*thly*, We are bid to turn unto God *with Mourning*; which being mention'd apart from Weeping, must be understood

derſtood of ſome other outward Signs and Tokens of Mourning, of which we read of many in Holy Scripture; as of *girding with Sackcloth*, of *ſprinkling the Head with Aſhes*, and *ſpreading Aſhes under them*. Iſa. 58. 5. Jer. 6. 26. Dan. 9. 3. And this gave the Name of *Aſhwedneſday* to this Day, from the antient Cuſtom of ſprinkling Aſhes on the Head, and wearing Sack-cloth on it. There were likewiſe other Marks of Mourning and Humiliation, as tearing the Hair, uncovering the Head and Feet, rending the Clothes, and the like, to which the Prophets were wont to call the People upon ſolemn and extraordinary Occaſions.

But leſt the People ſhould reſt or rely too much upon theſe outward Rites or Tokens of Mourning, the Prophet here calls upon them, in the next words, *Rend your Hearts, and not your Garments, and turn unto the Lord your God.* Where the Prophet alludes to the antient Practice of rending the Garments in token of mourning; and that they might not lay too great a ſtreſs upon that, or any other outward Sign of Sorrow, he wills them to look chiefly within, and conſult more the breaking of the Heart, than the tearing of their Clothes: for godly Sorrow conſiſts not in torn and ragged Apparel, but in a broken and contrite Heart; and the beſt Attire of the Soul, is not to be clad in Rags, but to be clothed with Humility. The rending of the Garments was an Emblem of a Heart torn with Sorrow, and was an outward Expreſſion of the higheſt inward Grief; and therefore the *Jewiſh* Doctors order'd it, never to be uſed but upon the Death of Parents or Princes, or in ſome great and common Calamities. And yet this alone was not ſufficient; for the tearing of their Garments was in God's ſight no better than Hypocriſy, without that Repentance and Contrition of Heart, which it was deſign'd to repreſent. *Rend therefore your Hearts* (ſaith the Prophet) *and not your Garments*; that is, rather than your Garments, for ſo the manner of expreſſing it ſignifies in Scripture: *I will have Mercy* (ſaith God) *and not Sacrifice*; that is, rather than Sacrifice. So that the Senſe here is, "Rend not your Garments only, but your Hearts alſo; "and let your principal Care be about this, without which "the other will be of no avail. Think not then (as one "paraphraſes this place) to pleaſe God with a Sorrow that "goes no nearer to you than the Borders of your Gar-"ment; let it pierce deeper, and enter the Heart: and

"by

" by ſo turning to the Lord your God, he will turn to " you, and receive you in the Arms of his Mercy."

And this will lead me, from the Manner, to the Motives and Encouragements hereunto, in the following words; *For God is gracious and merciful, ſlow to Anger, and of great Kindneſs, and repenteth him of the Evil.* Where every word ſpeaks nothing but Comfort, and is a powerful Attractive and Invitation to bring us to him.

He is gracious, free of Acceſs, and willing to give us a hearty Welcome, ready to ſhew Favour, and to impart his Grace and Goodneſs to us.

He is merciful, full of Compaſſion and Pity to all that are in Miſery; he ſtands not upon high or hard Terms, nor uſes any Rigour towards us, but gives all reaſonable Allowances, and is willing to forgive.

He is ſlow to Anger, not eaſily provok'd, nor forward to puniſh, but inclin'd to forbear and expect Amendment, and even waiting to be gracious. He gives frequent warnings before he ſtrikes; and when Mens Iniquities force him, his Bowels yearn, and turn within him.

He is of great Kindneſs, even to thoſe that have offended, being ready to be reconcil'd, and far more deſirous to ſpare than to puniſh.

He repenteth him of the Evil; not that there is any Change in him, but becauſe we change from worſe to better; then he changes the Courſe he threatned, but not his Mind, which was ever to puniſh the Obſtinate, and to ſpare the Penitent. Indeed, God cannot be properly ſaid to *repent*, for that ſuppoſes the knowledg of ſomething after, of which he was ignorant before, and that occaſions a Change of the Mind thereupon; none of which may be thought or affirm'd of God, who is both omniſcient and unchangeable. When repenting is any time aſcrib'd to him, it muſt be underſtood as ſpoken after the manner of Men, that we may be the better mov'd and affected towards him, by what we find and feel within our ſelves. Becauſe when we alter from a thing which we before reſolv'd on, we are ſaid to repent of it, therefore when God deſiſts from any Evil, which he before threatned, he is likewiſe ſaid to repent of it; tho the thing imply a Change in us, who are therefore properly ſaid to repent; but none at all in God, and therefore improperly aſcrib'd to him. However, the Prophet mentions it here as an Encouragement to turn to him; for tho his

Juſtice

Juſtice require him to publiſh his Anger againſt Sin, yet his Mercy is ever ready to embrace all Opportunities of laying it aſide. And therefore let not the greateſt Offenders deſpair, or be diſcourag'd from going to him by Prayer and Amendment. For

Who knoweth if he will return and repent of the Evil he purpos'd to inflict, when we repent of the Evil that we have done? The Mercies of God are both ſure and ſecret; and tho the Conditions of Mercy are publiſh'd to all, yet the Perſons that perform them are known only to him: and whatever Diſcouragements your own Hearts, and thoſe that wiſh you evil may ſuggeſt to you, who knows but that you may ſo far appeaſe his Wrath, as to cauſe him to *leave a Bleſſing behind him*; even ſuch a one as may turn your preſent Want and Scarcity into ſuch a Plenty, as may afford you not only enough to ſupply your Neceſſities, but to make *a Meat-Offering and a Drink-Offering*, as an Oblation of Thankfulneſs *unto the Lord your God*?

From theſe great Motives and Encouragements, the Prophet proceeds to call theſe *Iſraelites*, in their preſent Diſtreſs, to keep a ſolemn Faſt unto the Lord, for the better obtaining of theſe Bleſſings.

This is the Deſign of the following words; *Blow the Trumpet in* Zion, *ſanctify a Faſt, call a ſolemn Aſſembly, gather the People, ſanctify the Congregation, aſſemble the Elders*, &c. Where,

1ſt, The *blowing of the Trumpet in* Zion, relates to the Cuſtom of the *Jews*, grounded upon the Command of God given to *Moſes*, to *blow the Trumpet*, to *aſſemble the People at the Door of the Congregation*, as we read, *Numb.* 10. 3. Some Signal (you know) muſt be given, to call People together upon the ſolemn Occaſions of Divine Worſhip: and what is now done by us by the ſounding of a Bell, was then perform'd by them by the ſounding of a Trumpet; and to this the Prophet here refers, by *blowing the Trumpet in* Zion.

2dly, The *ſanctifying of a Faſt*, is the ſetting apart of ſome time for that purpoſe, and dedicating it to the Ends of Mourning and Prayer. Sanctifying in Scripture, when apply'd to Times and Places, ſignifies the ſeparating them from common Uſes to ſacred and holy Purpoſes; ſuch was the ſanctifying of the Sabbath, and the Temple, and ſuch likewiſe is the ſanctifying of a Faſt.

3dly,

3*dly*, The *calling of a ſolemn Aſſembly*, may ſignify not a common or ordinary Meeting, as at other times, but a more publick and general Aſſembly, call'd together for ſome more ſolemn Service, and upon more than ordinary Occaſions.

4*thly*, The *gathering of the People*, implies the bringing of all ſorts of Perſons together, to attend this more ſolemn Service; that they may be directed in their Duty, and join together in the Acts of Humiliation, Faſting, and Prayer, for the averting of Judgments, and procuring of all manner of needful and deſirable Bleſſings.

5*thly*, The *ſanctifying of the Congregation*, ſignifies the preparing and purifying of them before-hand, that they may come with pure Hearts, and lift up clean Hands unto the Lord; according to the Command given to *Moſes*, Exod. 19. 10. *Go unto the People, and ſanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them waſh their Clothes, and let them be ready againſt the third Day.* And ver. 22. *Let the Prieſts alſo, that come near unto the Lord, ſanctify themſelves, leſt the Lord break forth upon them.*

6*thly*, The *aſſembling of the Elders*, is the calling together of the Prieſts and Levites, the Princes and Governours, that all may join in theſe devout and holy Exerciſes.

And that none may abſent themſelves upon any pretence of Children, 'tis added, *Gather the Children, and thoſe that ſuck the Breaſts*; that they may learn betimes the way that they ſhould go, and be brought up in the Fear, Nurture, and Admonition of the Lord.

Furthermore, 'tis added, *Let the Bridegroom go forth of his Chamber, and the Bride out of her Cloſet*: that is, either let them leave their private Retirements, and come forth to attend the publick Devotion; or elſe let them abſtain from all carnal Pleaſures and Delights, during the days of Mourning and Faſting.

Laſtly, *The Prieſts and Miniſters of the Lord* are bid to *weep between the Porch and the Altar, and to ſay, Spare thy People, O Lord.* From hence 'tis ſuppos'd the Church took occaſion in Cathedrals to ſing or ſay the Litany in the midſt of the Church, between the Door of Entrance into the Quire and the Communion-Table; where the *Prieſts between the Porch and the Altar* are wont to ſay, *Spare us good Lord, and be not angry with us for ever.* To which the Prophet, here deprecating the Famine that was then upon them, adds, *And give not thine Heritage to Reproach,*

that

that the Heathen ſhould rule over them: Wherefore ſhould they ſay among the People, Where is their God? that is, as ſome tranſlate it, let not the Nations mock and make a By-word of thine own People, who are conſtrain'd thro Want to become ſubject to Stangers, having no means to ſupport or defend themſelves from them; which they therefore with Faſting and Mourning humbly implore, leſt the Heathen ſhould proceed farther, even to mock and blaſpheme God, and ſay in deriſion, *Where is now their God?*

Thus I have briefly ſet before you the Senſe and Subſtance of this Day's Epiſtle, which you ſee is a Call to Repentance, Faſting and Prayer: all which are more eſpecially to be minded and practis'd on this Day, which the Fathers call *Caput Jejunii*, the Head or Beginning of the great Faſt of *Lent*, and was by the Church appointed as a Day of extraordinary Humiliation; when beſide the general Call to Repentance and Mortification in which all were concern'd, there was likewiſe a godly Diſcipline exercis'd upon all notorious Offenders, who were then cenſur'd and turn'd out of the Church; and ſo ſtrictly avoided by all Chriſtians, that the poor Penitents finding no Succour, were forc'd by Shame and Fear to quit their evil Ways, and gladly ſubmitted to long and ſevere Penances as Tokens of their Sorrow and Reformation, in order to their Reſtoration.

This godly Diſcipline our Church wiſhes might be reſtor'd; but our unhappy Schiſms and Diſſenſions render it in vain to hope it in this untoward and untractable Generation; and therefore in the mean time it adviſes all Men to judg themſelves by the Law of God, that hearing or reading the Curſes denounc'd therein againſt impenitent Sinners, and giving their Aſſent by ſaying *Amen* to them, they may ſee their Guilt and their Danger, and by both be perſuaded to the only Remedy of Repentance to eſcape them.

And therefore to draw to a Concluſion, let us, from what hath been ſaid, learn,

1ſt, To turn unto God with full Purpoſe of Heart, whoſe Arms are wide open to receive and embrace us. Our Miſery is great enough to excite, and his Mercy is far greater to invite us to him; he is ſlow to Anger, and of great Pity, backward to puniſh, but very forward to pardon: And what can we, who have ſinn'd againſt him, do better, than with bended Knees and Hearts rent with Sorrow implore his Mercy, and ask his Pardon? Who can think of ſuch a

tender

tender Father without running to him, when we are ſo well aſſur'd of Favour and a kind Reception from him? Let us then no longer defer our Return to him, but with the prodigal Son go to him and ſay, *Father, we have ſinned againſt Heaven and before thee, and are no more worthy to be call'd thy Sons.* And if with penitent Hearts we thus come to him, we ſhall be receiv'd not as Servants but Sons, and be admitted to the Portion and Inheritance of Children.

Laſtly, Let us learn from hence religiouſly to obſerve the ſtated and ſolemn Seaſons of Faſting and Prayer. This, we ſee, is ſtrictly enjoin'd us by God himſelf merely for our own good, it being the beſt means of removing Judgments from us, and procuring Bleſſings to us. Faſting is ſometimes Phyſick for the Body, by giving Nature time to work off the preſent Burdens that lie upon it, without loading it farther; but 'tis more eſpecially deſign'd for the Welfare of the Soul, to fit it for the Service of God, by removing the Clogs and Hindrances of it, and to diſpoſe it for receiving the Graces of God's Holy Spirit, for which Surfeiting and Exceſs utterly unfit it.

In a word, this Seaſon being appointed for Contrition and Mortification, let us ſpend it in Acts of Self-denial, and more than ordinary Devotion, that by the holy Exerciſes of *Lent* we may be the better prepar'd for the Communion at *Eaſter*: which God grant, *&c.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE XLII.

The GOSPEL for the First Day of *Lent*, commonly call'd *Aſh-Wedneſday*.

St. Matthew vi. 16——21.

When ye faſt, be not as the Hypocrites, of a ſad Countenance; for they diſfigure their Faces, that they may appear unto Men to faſt. Verily, I ſay unto you, they have their Reward. But thou, when thou faſteſt, anoint thy Head and waſh thy Face, that thou appear not to Men to faſt, but unto thy Father, &c.

THE whole Service of this Day, which is the Beginning of *Lent*, calls us to the great Duty of Faſting; of which we have had ſome account in the Epiſtle for the Day, taken out of the Prophety of *Joel*. But this being a very uſeful Inſtrument of Religion, and neceſſary to the obtaining of Mercy and Pardon, 'twill be requiſite a little farther to explain and exhort to it; which I ſhall do from the Goſpel for the Day, taken out of our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount: where, in the foregoing Verſes of this Chapter, he directs his Followers to the three great Duties of Almſgiving, Prayer, and Faſting; in all which he cautions them againſt the Vanity and Oſtentation of Hypocrites, who did all their good Works only to be ſeen of Men; and inſtead of that, preſſes to a ſincere and ſecret Performance of them, which can alone approve them to God and Men.

When thou doeſt thine Alms (ſaith he) *do not as the Hypocrites do; for they ſound a Trumpet before them, that they may have Glory from Men:* ver. 2. *When thou prayeſt, be not like the Hypocrites, for they love to pray in the Synagogues and Corners of the Streets, to be ſeen of Men:* ver. 5. And here he gives the ſame Advice concerning Faſting: *When ye faſt, be not as the Hypocrites, of a ſad Countenance; for they*

diſfigure

disfigure their Faces, that they may appear unto Men to fast. Where we have,

First, The Duty of Fasting suppos'd; *When ye fast.*

Secondly, The Manner of performing this Duty aright; expres'd, 1*st*, Negatively; *Be not as the Hypocrites, of a sad Countenance.* And, 2*dly*, Positively; but *anoint thy Head, and wash thy Face, that thou appear not to Men to fast.* And lastly, the Reward that will attend so doing; *Thy Father that seeth in secret will reward thee openly.*

Thirdly, That some Times and Seasons are to be allotted or appointed for it, imply'd in the same words, *When* ye fast; which supposes some time. For the

First, The Duty enjoin'd is Fasting; *When ye fast.* Now Fasting is a Religious Duty, that consists in the abstaining from all, or some sorts of Meat, for a certain season, for the humbling of the Body, and for the Health and Welfare of the Soul. Of each of these briefly. And,

1. I stile it a Duty; for the many Precepts and Examples of it in Holy Scripture plainly shew it to be so. God Almighty commanded the *Israelites* to *afflict their Souls by a Statute for ever*, Lev. 16. 31. And that was to be done by Fasting, Sackcloth, and Ashes, to which he expresly call'd them, as we read, *Isa.* 22. 12. and Chap. 58. 5. The Prophet *Zechariah* makes mention of the *Fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth Month*, Zech. 8. 19. Our Saviour fasted before his Conflict with the Devil, *Mat.* 4. and elsewhere told his Disciples, that some *unclean Spirits cannot be cast out but by Prayer and Fasting.* *Anna* is commended for *serving God with Fasting and Prayer day and night*, Luke 2. 37. All which, and many more places to the same purpose, shew it to be a great and necessary Duty.

2. I stile it a Religious Duty, to distinguish it from a Physical Fast, prescrib'd for the preventing or removing any bodily Distemper; and likewise from a Civil and Political Fast, design'd only for the better Increase of Cattel, and promoting a greater Plenty. Whereas the Fast here treated of is more spiritual, *viz.* a Fast from all Sin and Wickedness, to beget in us such a Sense of the Evil and Danger of them, as may make us not only loath, but leave them: which things being taught and commanded of God, make it a Religious Duty.

3. I ſtile it a Duty that conſiſts in abſtaining from all Meat, if it be poſſible; if not, from thoſe ſorts that are more delicious and heightning: and both for a certain Seaſon. But here it may be ask'd, How often, and how long are we to abſtain from theſe things? In anſwer to which, in our private Faſts being left to our own liberty, we may allot ſo much of our Time to this purpoſe, as our Health, and other neceſſary Affairs and Duties will allow. But in publick Faſts, being to be directed by Superiors, we are to obſerve the Time appointed by Authority, be it more or leſs. If a Day be ſet apart to afflict our Soul, we are religiouſly to obſerve it, and to abſtain from our natural Food till the Evening. If it be for a longer Time, that muſt be obſerv'd likewiſe; as in *Eſther*'s Faſt, where the People were commanded, upon an extraordinary Occaſion, *not to eat or drink for three Days*; Eſther 4. 16. If it be for Weeks, or a longer Seaſon, as the *Lent*-Faſt, wherein the Frailty of our Natures will not admit of a total Abſtinence, there the antient Piety of former Chriſtians taught them to abſtain from all high and pampering Diet; and particularly, from Fleſh, which adminiſters Fuel to mens Luſts, and to confine themſelves to Fiſh, Herbs, and the like: which affording only a cold, weak, and watery Nouriſhment, are not ſo apt to inflame, nor to make Proviſion for the Fleſh, to fulfil the Luſts thereof.

4. I ſtile it an Abſtinence for the humbling of the Body, and for the Health and Welfare of the Soul: this directs us in the true Ends of Faſting; which are not *for Strife and Debate, to ſmite with the Fiſt of Wickedneſs, and to make the Voice to be heard on high*, as God complains of ſome, *Iſa.* 58. 4. nor yet for Vain-Glory and Oppreſſion, to be ſeen of Men, and to enrich themſelves upon the Spoils of their Neighbours; as our Saviour ſpeaks of the *Phariſees*, who *faſted, and made long Prayers*, merely *to devour Widows Houſes*, and to make a Prey of others: much leſs for wicked and worldly Ends, to vent their Spleen, and carry on their evil and malicious Deſigns, as *Jezebel* proclaim'd a Faſt to carry on the Murder of *Naboth*, and to ſeize his Vineyard; and we have known ſome, who have done the ſame for the Succeſs of a Civil War againſt their Prince, and to promote Rebellion and Regicide. Theſe are the vile and deteſtable Ends that ſome Men propound to themſelves in this Duty of Faſting: but the true Ends are,

1ſt, For

1*st*, For the humbling of the Body, and keeping it in Subjection, that it may not rebel against the Spirit, nor suffer Sin to reign in it. So St. *Paul*, who was *in Fastings often*, tells us, that he thereby *kept under his Body, and brought it into Subjection*; 1 Cor. 9. 27. High feeding and feasting is apt to pamper the Body, and make it let loose the Reins to all inordinate Motions; for which reason we are bid to *take heed, lest at any time our Hearts be over-charged with Surfeiting and Drunkenness*, Luke 21. 34. whereas fasting suppresses those fleshly Lusts that war against the Soul, and gives it Wings that mount it above all sensual Pleasures and Delights. And so leads to the

2*d* End of Fasting, *viz.* the Health and Welfare of the Soul; for it fits it for God's Service, and disposes it for all other Duties, and therefore is highly acceptable unto God, and profitable to our own Salvation. Thus having shew'd the Nature, the Necessity, and the Usefulness of Fasting, I proceed, as the Gospel directs us, to consider,

Secondly, The Manner or right Way of performing it; expres'd here,

1*st*, Negatively; When ye fast, *be not as the Hypocrites, of a sad Countenance; for they disfigure their Faces, that they may appear unto Men to fast.* Where our Saviour condemns all hypocritical and formal Fasting, and particularly that of the *Pharisees*; who when they fasted were wont to look very dejectedly, and to put on a sad Countenance: the word in the Original is σκυθρωποι, which, as one interprets it, is to look like *Scythians*, with a heavy and dismal Aspect; and this they did to shew the seeming Strictness and Austerity of their Religion. Yea, our Saviour adds, that they did *disfigure their Faces*; the original words are ἀφανίζουσι τὰ πρόσωπα, which signify, either their covering their Faces with a black Veil, or their using a Paint or Fucus, to make them look sad and mortified; and both, *that they might appear unto Men to fast*: by which they only sought Vain-Glory and the Praise of Men, and that render'd them vile and odious in the eyes of God; for *God looketh not, as Man looketh, on the outward Appearance, but beholds the Heart; and what* is many times *highly esteemed among Men, is an Abomination to the Lord*; Luke 16. 15. Of this kind was the Fasting so sharply reprov'd in the *Israelites*, who *bowed down their Heads like a Bulrush, and spread Sackcloth and Ashes under them*; and at the same time violated the

weightier Duties, of Juſtice and Mercy: for which God upbraided them by the Prophet, in theſe words; *Is this the Faſt I have choſen?* and *will ye call this a Faſt, or an acceptable Day unto the Lord?* Iſa. 58. 6. Meaning, that this was ſo far from being pleaſing to him, that his Soul abhorr'd ſuch falſe and feigned Offerings. This was the Faſting of the *Phariſees* and Hypocrites here rebuk'd by our Saviour. And much like it have been the Mock-Faſts of ſome deſigning Men among us; who by feigned Humiliations and long Prayers, have mocked God, and ſtirr'd up his Indignation againſt us.

Verily, I ſay unto you, (ſaith our Saviour) *they have their Reward.* They courted only the vain Breath of the Multitude, and that is all the Reward they have here, and they ſhall dearly rue for it hereafter. From this falſe, I proceed,

2*dly*, To the true and ſincere way of Faſting, preſcrib'd by our Saviour, in theſe words: *But thou, when thou faſteſt, anoint thy Head, and waſh thy Face, that thou appear not to Men to faſt, but unto thy Father, which is in ſecret.* Anointing the Head and waſhing the Face, were look'd upon as Tokens of Joy among the *Jews*, and were therefore us'd at Feaſts and Feſtivals; but never at Faſts or Times of Mourning. *Solomon* bid them at Feaſts, to *eat their Bread with Joy, and drink their Wine with a merry Heart; to let their Garments be always white*, and *to let their Heads lack no Ointment*; Eccleſ. 9. 7, 8. But in their Faſts they were to abſtain as much from anointing and waſhing, as from eating and drinking. Hence *Daniel* declares, in his faſting, that *he eat no pleaſant Bread, neither came Fleſh or Wine into his Mouth, neither did he anoint himſelf at all, till the three whole Weeks were fulfilled*; Dan. 10. 2, 3. *David*, when he made an end of mourning, *aroſe, and waſhed and anointed himſelf, and eat Bread*; 2 Sam. 12. 20. to ſignify, that the omitting of theſe, was a Ceremony that accompanied Faſting and Mourning. Accordingly we read of the Widow of *Tekoa*, that to *feign her ſelf a Mourner*, ſhe was bid *to put on mourning Apparel, and not to anoint her ſelf with Oil*; 2 Sam. 14. 2. By theſe Ceremonies, Faſts were diſtinguiſh'd from Feſtivals; and by abſtaining from waſhing and anointing, Men were known when they faſted. Now the *Phariſees* were ſtrict Obſervers of theſe outward Ceremonies, for they would neither anoint nor waſh, that People might ſee and know when they faſted; tho at the ſame time they had no regard to the inward Humiliation

of

of the Heart: for which reason our Saviour check'd their Hypocrisy, and advis'd his Followers not to affect any such outward Show and Ostentation, but in their Fasting to appear in their ordinary guise; that they might not appear to Men to fast, but to God only: yea, to anoint their Head, rather than to hang it down like a Bulrush; and rather to wash their Face, than suffer it to look black and dismal.

So that the great Lesson here taught us, is Sincerity; that in this and all other religious Duties, we endeavour not so much to recommend our selves unto Men, by any outward shows of Sadness, as to approve our selves unto God by the inward Sorrow and Humility of the Heart. And to that end, we should not put on sad Countenances and pensive Looks, as the Hypocrites do, but anoint and wash, as at other times; and put on the Garments of Praise, rather than the Spirit of Heaviness. Thus we see the Nature of Fasting, together with the right Way and Manner of performing it.

Thirdly, But the Phrase here, *When ye fast*, supposes some particular and solemn Seasons to be set apart for that purpose. *Solomon* tells us, that *there is a time for all things, a time to weep, and a time to laugh, a time to mourn, and a time to sing; and that all things are beautiful in their Season.* Fasting then and Mourning, must have their Times and Seasons, as well as Mirth and Rejoicing. And when is that? Why,

1. When any Judgment is impending over, or incumbent upon us, then is a proper time for Fasting and Prayer, that God would be pleas'd to prevent or remove it: When *Israel* was in Danger of Invasion, and great Perplexity and Distress befel *Jerusalem*; *In that Day* (saith the Prophet) *did God call to weeping and mourning, and girding with Sackcloth*; Isa. 22. 12. The Rod hath a Voice as well as a Smart; and 'tis our Wisdom to hearken to the one, when we feel the other: so we are directed, *Hear the Rod and him that appointed it.* If God hath afflicted any private Person with any particular Calamity, as Trouble of Mind, Sickness of Body, Loss of Friends or Goods, or any other Adversity, then is that Person call'd to private Fasting and Prayer, to humble himself before God, to bewail his Sins, and to deprecate the Evils he hath deserv'd. Again, when God finds it necessary to punish a whole Nation or Coun-

try with any publick Judgment, as War, Peſtilence, Famine, or the like; then does he call them to publick Faſting and Humiliation, to turn from their Sins, and return to him that ſmites them. In this, both the Precepts of Scripture and the Practice of all wiſe Nations, may fully ſatisfy us.

2. Another Seaſon of Faſting is, when we are entring upon any great, weighty, or difficult Enterprize. Thus when *Eſther* ſought to pacify the Anger of *Ahaſuerus*, and to ſave the *Jews* from Deſtruction, ſhe, and all the People, kept a ſolemn Faſt, *Eſther* 4. 16. When our Saviour was about to encounter the Devil, he prepar'd himſelf by faſting, *Mat.* 4. 2. not that he needed any ſuch help, but to give us an Example to do likewiſe. When the Apoſtles were to ordain Perſons to ſucceed in the Work of the Miniſtry, they faſted and prayed, *Acts* 13. 2, 3. This is the ground of obſerving *Ember*-Weeks, when Faſting and Praying have, from the Apoſtles time, been us'd in the Church, as preparatory to the Laying on of Hands. In ſhort, in all our Humiliations and great Undertakings, Faſting is to be join'd with Prayer: for as all things are ſanctified by Prayer, ſo does Faſting help to quicken our Prayers; and both together are very prevalent with God, for the obtaining of his Mercy and Bleſſing. And this will lead us, in the next place, to the Reward here promis'd to the ſincere and ſecret Performance of this Duty, in theſe words;

And thy Father which ſeeth in ſecret, ſhall reward thee openly. The Senſe whereof is, that God, who knows the Heart, will never forget this Labour of Love, how ſecretly ſoever it may be perform'd, but will ſignally and ſurely reward it in the View of all Men.

Now the Rewards of Faſting are partly in this Life, but chiefly in that which is to come. In this Life, we read of many Bleſſings and Succeſſes that have attended it. *Ahab*'s Puniſhment threatned for the Murder of *Naboth*, and ſeizing his Vineyard, was reſpited and ſuſpended, upon his Faſting and Humiliation, 1 *Kings* 21. 29. The *Ninivites*, who for their Wickedneſs were devoted to Deſtruction, had yet for their repenting, faſting, and praying, the Sentence reverſed; and God repented too of the Evil denounc'd againſt them, and did it not, as we read in the Book of *Jonas*: Of ſo great force is this Duty of Faſting with Almighty God, that it turns away his Wrath as ſoon as we turn unto him.

But

But the chiefest part of its Reward will be in the World to come, when our present Fastings will be chang'd into everlasting Feasting; and what is done here of that kind in the most secret Recesses, will be publickly own'd and rewarded before Angels and Men.

But because worldly Interest and Designs are too apt to mingle with, and corrupt this Duty of Fasting, therefore our Saviour seeks, in the next words, to withdraw Mens Affections from them, and keep them from placing any Trust or Confidence in them; saying, *Lay not up for your selves Treasures upon Earth, where Moth and Rust do corrupt, and Thieves break through and steal:* that is, do not immoderately pursue these earthly things, nor make that your Treasure, which is subject to the Corruption of the Moth and Rust, and liable to the Rapine of Thieves and Robbers. But *lay up for your selves Treasures in Heaven, where neither Moth nor Rust do corrupt, and where Thieves do not break through nor steal:* Raise your Affections to the Things above, which are perfectly free from all such Casualties; for the heavenly Treasure is not to be corrupted by the Moth, nor corroded by the Rust, nor invaded by Thieves, but is laid up in a safe Repository, out of the reach and power of all Accidents. This therefore he would have us seek, because the Treasure always draws the Heart after it; *For where our Treasure is, there will the Heart be also.* If we make any thing here below our Treasure, our Hearts will be glued and fasten'd to this World, and that will embase and corrupt our religious Services with low and secular Ends; but if we place our Treasure in Heaven, our Heart, our Delight, and our Conversation will be there too, and that will elevate us above all base and worldly Designs, and so render all our Services pure and acceptable unto God.

This is briefly the Substance of this Day's Gospel, which directs us in the two great Lessons of Fasting and Heavenly-mindedness, both which are to be learnt and practis'd by us; especially at this Season of *Lent*, when we are call'd to more than ordinary Acts of Self-Denial and Mortification. Let us then be mindful of this great and necessary Duty of Fasting, which if join'd with Prayer, will have a mighty Force and Efficacy with God: But then it must be duly qualify'd to attain this End; that is, it must be accompany'd with Repentance and Reformation. Indeed Fasting

carries in it ſomething of that Revenge upon a Man's ſelf for his former Exceſſes, which is an eſpecial part of Repentance; as we read, 2 *Cor.* 7. 11. For (as one hath well obſerv'd) by denying our Bodies the Refreſhment of our ordinary Food, we inflict ſomewhat of Puniſhment upon our ſelves; which is a proper Effect of that Indignation whcih every Sinner ought to have againſt himſelf, and is indeed very acceptable unto God. But then we muſt take care to faſt from Sin as well as from Food. If we hope to find Acceptance, we muſt ſo withdraw the Fuel from our Luſts, that they may not kindle or break out in any impure Flames: We muſt not reſt in the outward Formalities of Faſting, ſuch as a ſad Countenance, or disfigur'd Face, to appear unto Men to faſt, but look principally to the inward Sorrow and Sincerity of the Heart: to put on Sackcloth will avail nothing, except we be cloth'd with Humility; and to ſprinkle Aſhes on the Head will be of no uſe, without a broken and contrite Heart.

To conclude all; Let us, as occaſion ſhall require, be truly obſervant of this Duty, keeping a private Faſt for our own particular Sins, when we ſee it neceſſary for the ſubduing of them; and obſerving all publick Faſts enjoin'd for the bewailing of National Sins, and averting National Judgments and Calamities; and both with that Humility, Strictneſs, and Sincerity, that becometh Chriſtians profeſſing Godlineſs. Thus the keeping under of our Bodies will prove the Health and Welfare of our Souls, and our preſent ſhort and momentary Faſts will be turn'd into Feaſts of endleſs Joy and Felicity. Which God grant, *&c.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE XLIII.

The EPISTLE for the Firſt Sunday in *Lent.*

2 Cor. vi. 1——11.

We then, as Workers together with him, beſeech you alſo, that ye receive not the Grace of God in vain: For he ſaith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the Day of Salvation have I ſuccour'd thee. Behold now is the accepted time, &c.

THIS Seaſon of *Lent* hath been from the Days of the Apoſtles down to this laſt Age, religiouſly obſerv'd by all good Chriſtians, in memory of Chriſt's faſting forty Days and forty Nights, before his Combat with the Devil; and likewiſe as a good Preparative for the great Feſtival of *Eaſter*: tho 'tis now fallen, in our days, into too great Diſuſe and Contempt, to the great Decay of Vertue and Religion. However, our Church in its Service ſtill takes notice of it as a time of Abſtinence and Mortification: and as the *Iſraelites* were commanded to afflict themſelves, and to eat bitter Herbs before they were to eat the Paſchal Lamb; ſo the Church requires to keep under the Body by low and ſpare Diet, the better to prepare for the Feaſt of *Eaſter*, when we are to feed upon that Lamb of God, that taketh away the Sins of the World: and therefore

The Collect for this Day teaches us to pray to our Lord, who for our ſake did faſt forty Days and forty Nights, to give us Grace to uſe ſuch Abſtinence, that our Fleſh being ſubdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey his godly Motions in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs. To diſpoſe us hereunto,

The Epiſtle for the Day directs us to walk ſuitably to our Chriſtian Profeſſion, and to keep to the ſtrict Rules

requir'd

requir'd thereby. The Subſtance of which Epiſtle may be reduc'd to two Heads.

Firſt, The great Privileges we enjoy by the Light of the Goſpel. And,

Secondly, The Returns of Duty and Gratitude we are to make for them; which are likewiſe double, *viz.* The doing all things commanded us in the Goſpel: And the ſuffering all things that may be occaſion'd by it.

I ſhall ſpeak to both in the Order in which they are in the Epiſtle.

It begins with theſe words; *We then as Workers together with him, beſeech you, that ye receive not the Grace of God in vain.*

The Apoſtle had, in the latter end of the foregoing Chapter, told us of the great Grace and Goodneſs of God to Mankind, in reconciling them to himſelf by Jeſus Chriſt, *Chap.* 7. 18, 19, 20. And his committing to them the Miniſtry of this Reconciliation, to preach and publiſh it to the World. So that *we are now Ambaſſadors for Chriſt* (ſaith he) *as tho God did beſeech you by us, we pray you in Chriſt's ſtead, to be reconciled to God.* From whence he infers theſe words, *We then as Workers together with Chriſt*; that is, as Proxies or Partners join'd with him in the Work of Man's Salvation: he indeed as the Maſter-workman, that contriv'd and compaſs'd it; and we, as Under-workers, appointed by him to publiſh and propagate it: and both join together to *beſeech you*, not to fruſtrate the Divine Goodneſs, *nor receive the Grace of God in vain.* Where, by *the Grace of God*, we are to underſtand the Goſpel of Grace, or the Glad-Tidings of Salvation; for ſo the Grace of God is ſometimes ſet to ſignify, as *Titus* 2. 12. *The Grace of God which bringeth Salvation*, that is, the Goſpel of Grace that brings the News of the Favour of God in Man's Salvation, *hath appeared unto all Men.* Which Grace of God, we that work with Chriſt, and ſupply his place in treating with Men about it, intreat you not to refuſe, and ſo to receive the Goſpel to no purpoſe, or to caſt the Word of his Grace and Reconciliation from you. For ſo the receiving the Goſpel in vain here ſignifies: And they who refuſe the Tenders of Grace and Mercy offer'd in it, and reject the Terms of Peace and Reconciliation with God made by it, are the Perſons that are ſaid to do ſo. This is what the

Apoſtle

Apoſtle here ſo earneſtly begs and beſeeches Chriſtians to beware of: which he rather does, becauſe the Seaſon of the Goſpel is the accepted Time, or Day of Salvation choſen by God, wherein theſe Tenders of Mercy and Reconciliation are made: For he ſaith in the next words,

I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the Day of Salvation have I ſuccoured thee: meaning, that there is an acceptable Time, wherein we may be heard, and that there is a Day of Salvation, wherein we may be ſuccoured; which if neglected, we may loſe the Opportunity of both. And then adds, *Behold, now is the accepted Time; behold, now is the Day of Salvation.* The words are quoted out of the 49th Chapter of *Iſaias*, and the 8th Verſe; *Thus ſaith the Lord, in an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a Day of Salvation have I help'd thee, and I will preſerve thee, and give thee for a Covenant of the People*, &c. Which Words are a Prophecy concerning the Meſſiah in the times of the Goſpel, wherein God the Father promiſes to beſtow that Salvation, which ſhall be then purchas'd and procur'd by his Son. And the Apoſtle here tells us, that this is the Seaſon pitch'd upon for the fulfilling of theſe Prophecies and Promiſes to the Sons of Men; that now the Goſpel hath reveal'd theſe things to them, and the Miniſters of the Goſpel are ſent to preach and preſs theſe gracious Offers upon them; and therefore earneſtly entreats all Chriſtians, not to ſlip this time, or to neglect ſo great Salvation, but rather to accept of the Tenders, and cloſe with the Terms of it, that they may not receive the Grace of God in vain. Theſe are ſome of the great Mercies and Privileges, we now enjoy by the Light of the Goſpel; by which we may, if we pleaſe, know the things that belong to our Peace, before they are hid from our Eyes. To prevent which, I ſhall proceed to the

Next Thing to be ſpoken to, and that is the Return we are to make for theſe ineſtimable Favours. And this will concern both the Miniſters that are to preach the Goſpel, and the People that are to hear it; both which, in return for this Mercy, are to do what the Goſpel requires, and to ſuffer what they may meet with in ſo doing. As for the Miniſters of the Goſpel, the Apoſtle exhorts them to an innocent and inoffenſive Converſation, ver. 3. *Giving no offence in any thing, that the Miniſtry be not blam'd:* that is, giving no juſt Offence by the Looſeneſs or Lazineſs of their Lives,

nor

nor laying any Scandal or Stumbling-blocks in the way, at which others may trip, or fall into Infidelity. They who are Teachers of others, ſhould be Examples of their own Doctrine, and labour to preſs it upon the People by their own Practice, leſt they hinder them from embracing the Goſpel, which they ſeem not to believe themſelves: for few will be gain'd to that, which they ſee thoſe that perſuade them to it, do ſhrink and vary from; nor will the People walk in thoſe ways, which they ſee their Leaders to decline. And therefore the Apoſtle wills us carefully to abſtain from all things that may avert any from the Faith, or bring any Blame on the Miniſtry; and ſtrictly keep to thoſe things, that may gain Proſelytes, and adorn our Profeſſion. *In all things* (as he goes on) *approving our ſelves as the Miniſters of God*, and ſhewing all Fidelity in the diſcharge of our Office.

Neither doth he reſt in theſe general Exhortations, but in the following Verſes he deſcends to Particulars, and ſhews us wherein we are thus to demean our ſelves both to God and Man.

As, *1ſt*, *In Patience*, or a firm Steddineſs of Mind under all ſorts of Evils; as *in Afflictions*, *in Neceſſities*, *in Diſtreſſes*; which may befal us at the hands of God: *In Stripes*, *in Impriſonments*, *in Tumults*; which may befal us from the hands of Men: *In Labours*, *in Watchings*, *in Faſtings*; which we may impoſe upon our ſelves for our Soul's Good. All which are the Trials of our Patience, which muſt be borne and gone through with Courage and Conſtancy; that *Patience may have her perfect Work*, *that we may be perfect and entire*, *wanting nothing*; James 1. 4.

And having thus directed us in the Objects and Exerciſes of our Patience, all which he himſelf had manfully undergone, as he tells us in 2 *Cor.* 11. latter end; he proceeds in the next Verſe to preſcribe the proper Ways and Means, by which we may be enabled to do the ſame. As, firſt, *by Pureneſs*, in oppoſition to all the Impurities of carnal and ſenſual Luſts. Purity of Body and Mind adds Strength and Vigour to both, fortifies them againſt Temptations, and enervates all the Wiles of the Devil; it prevents Evils, or enables to bear them: In a word, Purity recommends our Perſons, and adorns our Profeſſion; and is either a good Preſervative from Trouble, or a Safeguard under it. Whereas the Impurities of fleſhly Luſts defile the Soul, emaſculate the Body, and enfeeble all the Powers

and

and Faculties of each. *How weak is thine Heart* (ſaith God) *ſeeing thou haſt done theſe things?* Ezek. 16. 30. 'Tis ſpoken in the Caſe of Harlotry and Fornication, and other fleſhly and filthy Luſts, which pollute and weaken both Soul and Body, and render them unable to withſtand any Temptation; theſe things ſtain both our Perſon and Profeſſion, and bring on thoſe Evils, which we can neither bear nor avoid. And therefore we ſhould, as at all times, ſo eſpecially at this Seaſon of Mortification, *abſtain from fleſhly Luſts, which war againſt the Soul*; and labour to preſerve an unſpotted Chaſtity and Purity of Mind: for *the Wiſdom that is from above* (as St. *James* tells us) *is firſt pure*, and free from all Pollution, which is the Pureneſs here recommended.

2*dly*, The Apoſtle, for the diſcharge of our Duty recommends *Knowledg*, in oppoſition to wilful Blindneſs and Ignorance. By Pureneſs, *by Knowledg*, that is, of God and our ſelves; which will ſhew us the Light of Divine Truths, and lead us to our Duty. A true Knowledg of God will make us willing to do what he enjoins, and to bear what he inflicts; for he doth both entirely for our Good, and conſults in them nothing but our Intereſt and Happineſs; he never willingly grieves or afflicts any, nor lays any more upon us, than he enables to bear; he uſes the Rod only to enforce his Word, to make us learn, and fit us to be remov'd to a higher Form: He that knows and conſiders this, will receive his Counſels, and reform by his Corrections.

And as the Knowledg of God, ſo the Knowledg of our ſelves is very uſeful and neceſſary to theſe ends. He that knows his own Impotence, and his total Dependence upon God for all things, will be the more eaſily perſuaded to hearken to him; and he that rightly conſiders how much harder things he deſerves, than thoſe he feels, may learn thankfully to embrace his Favours, and patiently to endure his Frowns. To which end,

3*dly*, The Apoſtle farther recommends *Long-ſuffering*, in oppoſition to Paſſion and Peeviſhneſs. So the next Word is, *by Long-ſuffering*. This is a Vertue that keeps the Mind calm and eaſy under all that can happen: St. *Paul* makes it a Branch or Property of Charity, 1 *Cor.* 13. 4. *Charity ſuffereth long*; and elſewhere makes it an Ornament of the Mind, and the main Grace of our Chriſtian Profeſſion, *Eph.* 4. 1, 2. where exhorting Chriſtians to *walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith they are call'd*, adds, *with Long-*

ſuffering,

ſuffering, forbearing one another in Love, as the beſt Way and Means to that end. This Vertue takes off the Haſtineſs of Mens Spirits, and checks all Thoughts of revenging and returning Evils; it teaches Forbearance in caſe of Wrongs, and to overcome Evil with Good, which is a Vertue to be learnt and practis'd at all times, but more eſpecially at this time of greater Devotion and Charity. Again,

4*thly*, Another Way and Means here recommended, is, *by Kindneſs*; which, to the bearing of Evil, adds the doing of Good, and that to the Bodies and Souls, to the Eſtates and good Name of one another: in all which, Chriſtianity obliges to all good Offices, and to be as helpful to each other in theſe Matters as we can. Hereby we ſhall imitate the Bounty of Heaven, which is ſtill ſhowring down Bleſſings, and alſo the Love of our Saviour, who *went about ſtill doing good.*

Moreover, the Apoſtle wills us to approve our ſelves as the Miniſters of God, *by the Holy Ghoſt*; that is, by the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Ghoſt, given to that end. In the early days of Chriſtianity, there were the extraordinary Gifts of Miracles, Tongues and Propheſying, which were all commanded to be us'd for the Good of the Church, and the Edification of the Members of it. But thoſe being long ſince ceas'd, we are now to approve our ſelves by the diligent Exerciſe of thoſe ordinary Gifts, that are ſtill contin'd and beſtow'd for that purpoſe, and that is to be done too *by Love unfeign'd*; that is, with a ſincere Charity and Zeal for the Good of Mens Souls.

Furthermore, we are to approve our ſelves unto God, *by the Word of Truth*; that is, by preaching the Goſpel of Chriſt, the Word of Truth and eternal Life; which will be made effectual *by the Power of God*, and the Operations of his Holy Spirit: being guarded *by the Armour of Righteouſneſs on the right hand and on the left*; by which we may be able to repel all Temptations on every ſide.

In this Courſe he would have the Miniſters of Chriſt to perſevere both *by Honour and Diſhonour*, not being lifted up by the one, or caſt down by the other: *By evil Report and good Report*, carrying the ſame Calmneſs and Equanimity of Mind under both. From hence he takes occaſion to inſtance in ſome of thoſe evil Reports and mean Sentiments, that the World may have of them; which yet are very contrary to the Truth and Reality of things, and far different from what Chriſt hath told them, and their own Experience may inform them.

As

As Deceivers, and yet true; that is, the wicked World may reckon you as Impoſtors, that follow cunningly-deviſed Fables, and ſeek to impoſe upon the Faith and Credulity of the People: but Chriſt will own you as his true and faithful Servants, and will reward you accordingly.

As unknown, and yet well known; tho you may be deſpis'd and look'd upon by ſome as Perſons whom they know not, yet ſhall you by undoubted Proofs be known to them who you are, even the Miniſters of God. The *Jews* would not know Chriſt himſelf, and ſome ſaid of the Apoſtles, *Away with theſe Fellows, we know not whence they are*: but theſe were after well known by their Doctrine and Miracles; and ſo will all they that publiſh and adhere to them.

As dying (as he goes on) *and behold we live*; tho we have been often in danger of Death, and judg'd as loſt Men; tho ſome have wiſh'd and threatned Death to us, yet by God's Help we are ſtill alive, and under the Safeguard of his Almighty Arm.

As chaſtened, and not killed. We may be permitted indeed to be afflicted and chaſten'd for our good, and may be ſometimes quicken'd in our Duty by the Rod; but God will not ſuffer their Malice to go ſo far as to put us to death, but will ſave and defend us from all ſuch Cruelty. It follows in the next words,

As ſorrowful, yet alway rejoicing: to outward appearance we may be thought full of Trouble and Melancholy, and our Lives look'd upon to be made up of nothing but Sorrow and Sadneſs; when yet we are all the while inwardly eaſy and chearful, and can always rejoice in the Teſtimony of a good Conſcience.

Laſtly, *As poor, yet making many rich*; *as having nothing, and yet poſſeſſing all things.* Tho we are poor and low in Subſtance, yet do we enrich others with far more valuable Riches; and tho we ſeem to want and to have nothing, yet having a contented Mind, we poſſeſs a Treaſure, that abundantly ſupplies us with all things: wherein we imitate our bleſſed Saviour, who for our ſakes became poor, that we thro his Poverty may be made rich; and what is wanting in temporal good things, is ſupply'd in ſpiritual and heavenly Enjoyments.

Thus I have gone thro the ſeveral Parts and Paſſages of this Day's Epiſtle; from whence we may draw the following Inferences:

1ſt, We

1*ſt*, We learn hence the honourable Work and Buſineſs of the Miniſtry, which is a Fellow-working with God in the matter of Man's Salvation; ſo the Apoſtle here ſpeaks, *We then as Workers together with God*, &c. And what better Work and Employment can we be ſet about, than to be not only Partners with the Angels, who are ſent forth as miniſtring Spirits to the Heirs of Salvation, but to be Fellow-workers with God and Chriſt in reconciling the World to himſelf? Chriſt's Part herein was the purchaſing our Peace by the Blood of his Croſs, and our Part is the publiſhing this Peace by the Word of his Grace; in which, as we ought to be faithful and diligent, ſo are the People to receive and reſpect us accordingly.

2*ly*, We are taught, by the Epiſtle for this Day, not to receive the Goſpel, which is the Grace of God, in vain, but to anſwer the End, that we may obtain the Reward of it. Hence we are bid to walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith we are call'd, that we may not bring Diſhonour upon our Holy Profeſſion; and elſewhere, to walk as becometh the Goſpel of Chriſt: otherwiſe we ſhall only bear the Name of Chriſt, to expoſe and diſparage it, which will be not only to receive the Grace of God *in vain*, but to very bad purpoſe; for if we thus abuſe and turn the Grace of God into Wantonneſs, we ſhall turn his Favour into Fury; and the Goſpel of Grace, inſtead of advancing our Happineſs, will but aggravate our Condemnation. The greater Light of it will ſink us into the deeper Abyſs of Darkneſs, and all the Woes and Threatnings contain'd in it will light upon our own Heads; t or *better had it been never to have known the ways of Righteouſneſs, than having known them, to turn away from the Holy Commandment*: 2 Pet. 2. 21.

3*ly*, From what hath been ſaid, we learn, that as God hath his accepted Times and Seaſons, when he will be heard and ready to ſuccour us; ſo it will be our Duty and Wiſdom to embrace and lay hold of them. The Wiſeman tells us of ſome, who have Prizes put into their Hands, and yet have no Hearts to make uſe of them; whom he therefore ſtiles Fools, that afterward, when it is too late, repent of their Folly. Our Saviour wept over *Jeruſalem*, and bewail'd their Folly, for letting ſlip the time of Mercy, and thereby bringing upon themſelves inevitable Deſtruction; ſaying, *Oh that thou hadſt known, in this thy Day, the things that belong unto thy Peace! but now they are hid*

hid from thine Eyes. Our Apoſtle here tells us, *that the Days of the Goſpel are the accepted time, and that now is the Day of Salvation*; which we are therefore to cloſe with and improve to the beſt advantage; for if we neglect or let it ſlip, we ſhall have cauſe to lament, but muſt never hope to repair our Folly.

Laſtly, We may learn from hence Patience and Perſeverance in well-doing, notwithſtanding all the Difficulties and Diſcouragements we may meet with in it. We ſee the Apoſtles went thro many Afflictions and Tribulations, without Wearineſs or Fainting under them; they ſtill kept on in the way of their Duty, and carry'd an indifferent and equal Mind in all the good or bad Fortune that befel them: They went thro Honour and Diſhonour, thro good Report and bad Report, without being elevated by the one, or depreſs'd by the other. Let us imitate their noble Example, by holding out to the end, and then by following them in the ways of Grace here, we ſhall e'er long follow them to Glory: which God grant, for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt, *&c.*

DISCOURSE XLIV.

The GOSPEL for the Firſt Sunday in *Lent.*

St. Matthew iv. 1——11.

Then was Jeſus led up of the Spirit into the Wilderneſs, to be tempted of the Devil. And when he had faſted forty Days and forty Nights, he was afterwards an hungred, &c.

IN the Goſpel for this Day we have an Account of that memorable Paſſage of Chriſt's Temptation, and therein of the moſt glorious Combat that was ever fought on Earth, *viz.* between Chriſt and the Devil, the Prince of Peace againſt the Prince of Darkneſs; together with the compleateſt Victory and Conqueſt that was ever won, the Devil being abſolutely foil'd and routed in all his Attempts.

Of which great Action, we have here the Time, Place, Manner, and other Circumſtances fully related to us: which Relation begins Verſe 1. *Then was Jeſus led up of the Spirit into the Wilderneſs, to be tempted of the Devil.* Where the Time of entring upon this Combat, is imply'd in the word *then:* And when was that? Why, that the Cloſe of the foregoing Chapter will ſhew us; where we read of his being baptiz'd by *John* in *Jordan: And ſtraitway when he went up out of the Water, the Heavens were open'd unto him, and he ſaw the Spirit of God deſcending like a Dove, and lighting upon him; and lo! a Voice from Heaven, ſaying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed.* Immediately after this, and before he enter'd upon his Office of Preaching, *then* it was, that *he was led up of the Spirit into the Wilderneſs.* The ſame Spirit of God, that juſt before lighted upon him, and gave this Teſtimony of him, here led him into the Wilderneſs: St. *Mark* expreſſes it by driving him into the Wilderneſs, *Mark* 1. 12. to ſhew that he did not voluntarily run or put himſelf into Temptation, but was by a vehement Impulſe or Incitation of the Holy Ghoſt (of which St. *Luke* tells us he was full) led or drawn into it; *Luke* 4. 1. *Being full of the Holy Ghoſt, he return'd from* Jordan, *and was led by the Spirit into the Wilderneſs.* That was the place where he was to *be tempted of the Devil*; Solitarineſs and unfrequented Receſſes being moſt liable to the Hauntings and Sollicitations of evil Spirits. Now to prepare himſelf for this Encounter, as alſo for his Entrance on the Work of the Miniſtry after, he ſet apart ſome time for Abſtinence and Prayer; not that he needed ſuch things to thoſe ends, his Divinity being able to aſſiſt his Human Nature without thoſe Helps, but to leave us an Example in all great Enterprizes to do the ſame. He faſted forty Days and forty Nights, in imitation of *Moſes* and *Elias*, who both faſted ſo long, the one at the giving of the Law, and the other at the reſtoring of it; as we read, *Exod.* 24. 18. & 1 *Kings* 19. 8. whoſe Examples mov'd Chriſt to do the ſame at the beginning of the Goſpel. And the primitive Church, in imitation of our Bleſſed Saviour, appointed likewiſe a Faſt of forty Days as a Preparative for *Eaſter*; not indeed a total Abſtinence from all Meat, as our Saviour's was, for our weak Natures cannot bear that; but a low and ſpare Diet, and to uſe ſuch Abſtinence, that the Fleſh being ſubdu'd to the Spirit, we may the better obey the godly Motions of the Holy Spirit. This holy Faſt was continu'd

without

without interruption from the Apoſtles days down to this laſt Age, at which time our unhappy Civil Wars put a ſtop to this pious and antient Practice.

But to return to our Saviour; *When he had faſted forty Days and forty Nights, he was afterward an hungred.* When he had ſpent that long time in Contemplation and Prayer, without eating or drinking any thing, Nature began to return to its ordinary Courſe and Craving, inſomuch that he was vehemently preſs'd with Hunger; ſhewing that he felt the ſame Appetites of Hunger and Thirſt, and was liable to the ſame Infirmities of human Nature with our ſelves. The Devil finding him thus pinch'd with Want and Hunger, as other Men in ſuch caſes are wont to be, thought hereby to gain ſome advantage upon him; and therefore here made his firſt Onſet, attacking him on this weak ſide, to prevail on his Infirmity: for *the Tempter came* preſently *to him, and ſaid, If thou be the Son of God, command that theſe Stones be made Bread.* Where he makes uſe of his preſent Neceſſity, and withal urges the Dignity of his Perſon, as being the Son of God, to draw him into ſome diffidence or diſtruſt of his Father; and would not have him wait for his Father's Proviſion, which might be long a coming, but make uſe of his Divine Power to ſupply himſelf in an extraordinary way in this Exigence. He ſuggeſted to him, that his Condition requir'd preſent Relief, and 'twas in vain to ſtay for the coming down of Bread from Heaven, or the ſpringing up of Bread from the Earth; but he ſhould work a Miracle to help himſelf in ſuch a Neceſſity, and turn the Stones before him into Bread. Now the Devil had a double Deſign in this Temptation; the one to draw from Chriſt ſome proof or trial of his Divinity, to be made uſe of or eluded as he ſaw cauſe; the other, to draw him into Sin, as either Impatience, or Deſpair of his Father's Care of him, or Pride, and Preſumption in himſelf, or Rebellion againſt God; either of which would defeat the End of his Coming. This is the Temptation, or firſt Attack made upon him.

But how did our Saviour elude or eſcape it? Why, by quoting of God's Word againſt him; for *he anſwer'd and ſaid, It is written, Man ſhall not live by Bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God.* Theſe words are written in *Deut.* 8. 3. where the *Iſraelites* being hungry and thirſty in the Wilderneſs, demanded of

Moſes a Miracle for their Suſtenance: to whom he reply'd in theſe words, *Man doth not live by Bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God:* intimating thereby, that in caſes of Want we are to depend upon the Providence of God, who is all-ſufficient, and able with a Word to ſupply our Neceſſities, as he did the *Iſraelites* with Manna in the Deſart. Moreover, he might intimate to Satan what he after told his Diſciples, that *he had Meat to eat which they knew not of*, John 4. 32, 34. and that *his Meat and Drink was to do the Will of him who ſent him.* Neither needed he a Miracle to ſatisfy his Hunger, when he could do it by other ordinary means; for he had *John*'s Food in the Wilderneſs where he was, and by ſpeedily quitting it, he could have it elſewhere. Thus he foil'd him in his firſt Temptation, not by gratifying his Curioſity with a needleſs Miracle, but by teaching an excellent Leſſon of Submiſſion, Obedience, and Reſignation to his Father's Will in the greateſt Extremities.

The Devil being thus worſted in his firſt Attempt, reſolves to try a ſecond; and ſince he could not draw our Saviour into a Deſpair or Diſtruſt of his Father's Care, he ſeeks to drive him into Preſumption, or a caſting himſelf upon it without warrant: ſo natural is it for the Devil and Men too to run from one Extreme to the other, like the poſſeſs'd Man in the Goſpel, who fell ſometimes *into the Fire*, and ſometimes *into the Water*, Mat. 17. 15. So do Men fall ſometimes into the Fire of ill-temper'd Zeal, ſometimes into the Waters of Coolneſs and Indifference. Now this ſecond Aſſault of Satan's is in the next Verſes: *Then the Devil taketh him up into the Holy City, and ſetteth him on a Pinacle of the Temple, and ſaith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, caſt thy ſelf down; for it is written, He ſhall give his Angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands ſhall they bear thee up, leſt at any time thou daſh thy foot againſt a Stone.* Where the Devil is ſaid to take him up, and by St. *Mark* to bring him; neither of which imply any Violence, or dragging him by force, but his going by conſent, or a complying with and attending his Motion.

Some indeed tell us, that God gave Satan for the time ſome power over Chriſt's Body, as he did once over *Job*'s, that the Devil might do his worſt, and ſo make our Saviour's Victory over him the greater. Moſt probable it is, that Satan carry'd him through the Air without any hurt,

by

by the permiſſion of God and Chriſt himſelf; for he might ſay to the Devil, as he did once to *Pilate*, *Thou couldſt have no power over me, except it were given thee from above*; John 19. 11. But whither did the Devil carry him? Why, he took him up, and brought him *into the Holy City*; that is, to *Jeruſalem*, call'd the Holy City becauſe it was the Seat of the Temple and Altar, and the Place of God's more immediate Preſence and Worſhip. Thither, from the Privacy and Retirements of the Wilderneſs, he was carry'd into a place of greater State and more publick Reſort. When he came there, *the Devil ſet him upon a Pinacle of the Temple*; that is, upon the Battlements of the Temple, for a Pinacle properly taken is of that Narrowneſs and Sharpneſs at top, that a Bird can hardly pitch upon it, and much leſs can a human Body be plac'd there. 'Tis generally interpreted of the flat Roof of the Tower over the *Porticus* or Porch of the Temple, which was rais'd higher than the reſt of the Fabrick, and faced the Courts. Here he minds him again of his being ſtil'd the Son of God, and would have him to ſhew himſelf to be ſo, by caſting himſelf down from thence; which he might ſecurely do by the ſtrength of his Divine Power, and the Guardianſhip of the Angels that continually attended his Safety. And here the Tempter quoteth Scripture, and comes with his *It is written, He ſhall give his Angels charge concerning thee, and ſhall bear thee up, leſt thou daſh thy foot againſt a ſtone.* The words are written in the 91ſt Pſalm, *ver.* 11, 12. but are here wreſted, miſalledg'd, and miſapply'd by Satan, for he cites this Scripture by halves: *He ſhall give his Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways:* Here he omits this latter Clauſe, which promiſes Protection only whilſt we keep to the ways of our Duty and Calling; but if we go out of thoſe ways, we go out of God's Protection, which is promis'd on no other terms, but whilſt we confine our ſelves to the Buſineſs of our Vocation. The Providence of God, and the Care of the holy Angels, will preſerve us in all unavoidable Dangers that may happen in the ways of our Calling, but not in thoſe voluntary Difficulties we draw upon our ſelves by leaving it.

But how did our Saviour anſwer, and avoid this Temptation? Why, by the ſame Weapon of God's Word: for *Jeſus ſaid unto him, it is written again, Thou ſhalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* Which words are written, *Deut.* 6. 16. where the *Iſraelites* are forbidden to tempt God, as they

often did, by asking things unſeaſonably, or unneceſſarily; and to fall a murmuring, if they had it not in the time or manner that they expected: for which reaſon we are caution'd not to tempt God, as ſome of them often tempted him, 1 *Cor.* 10. 9. Now tempting of God is either by putting too little Confidence in him; thus the *Iſraelites* doubting of God's Care, Power, and Goodneſs in providing for them, after ſo many Arguments and Aſſurances thereof, is in Scripture frequently ſtiled their tempting of God: or elſe the putting too much, or too vain and groundleſs Confidence in him; thus to run one's ſelf into danger, and then expect to be ſav'd by a Miracle out of it, is a tempting of God, and ſo it is to look for that in an extraordinary way, which may be done by ordinary means. This was here the Caſe of our Saviour; the Devil would have him throw himſelf down from the Pinacle of the Temple, in hopes of being preſerv'd by a Divine Power, or the Care of Angels, when perhaps he might go down by the ſtairs, or other ordinary ways of going up: or if the Devil would have him do this, to ſhew whether he were the Son of God, or to ſee whether God would own and preſerve him as ſuch, he tells him there was no need of ſuch Evidences for that, which was already declar'd by a Voice from Heaven; *Mat.* 3. 17. So that what he deſir'd, would be a tempting of God, ſo manifeſtly forbidden, that the Devil could make no farther Reply to it. Thus was he foil'd a ſecond time, and his Temptation to Preſumption prevail'd no more than that to Deſpair. However, the Devil would not give off ſo, and tho he were routed twice, yet would he rally again once more, and come on with a

Third Temptation, and ſee whether he could draw him into Idolatry. This follows in the next words; *Again the Devil taketh him up into an exceeding high Mountain, and ſheweth him all the Kingdoms of the World and the Glory of them, and ſaith unto him, All theſe things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worſhip me.* Here the Devil treats our Saviour not as the Son of God, but as the Carpenter's Son; magnifying himſelf above him, and promiſing to prefer and do great things for him, if he would do as he would have him. To that end, he takes him from the Pinacle of the Temple, from whence he had the proſpect of *Jeruſalem* only, and tranſports him to a place of greater height, even to the top of an exceeding high Mountain,

tain, where he had a much greater and larger proſpect. There, beſides all that was within the ken and reach of his Eye to behold from that great height, he repreſents unto him, as in a Scheme or Map, the great and ſpacious Kingdoms of the Earth, with all the Glory and Beauty of them; all which he ſet forth and ſhew'd him at once (in a moment, ſaith St. *Luke*) as all at his command, and lying at his feet, telling him, that all theſe things were his, and that to whomſoever he pleas'd he could give them; and that if our Saviour would but bow the Knee, and give him the Honour due to ſuch a Benefactor, that is, if he would fall down and worſhip him, they ſhould all become his, and he ſhould be preſently put into poſſeſſion of them. Here 'tis probable that the Devil, in this laſt Temptation, enlarg'd himſelf with many glozing Words and Arts of Inſinuation, telling him, what great things he had done for others, and how much greater things he deſign'd for him; hoping that the View and Promiſe of ſuch worldly Pomp might work upon one that came out of a Wilderneſs, and never ſaw ſuch things before. But this Propoſal of his was full of Pride and Falſhood: The Devil was a Lyar from the beginning, and deceiv'd our firſt Parents with his Lyes and Impoſtures; and he hoped to do the ſame with our Bleſſed Saviour, who could eaſily ſee through and detect all his Fallacies.

The truth is, the Devil is ſo far from being able to give the Kingdoms of the World and the Glory of them, that (as one hath obſerv'd) he cannot give a poor Witch a Farthing, for all her falling down, worſhipping, and giving her Soul to him. Yea, he hath not the diſpoſal of himſelf, being a miſerable Captive, ty'd up in Chains of Darkneſs, and can go no further than God permits him.

However, our Saviour, in repelling this Temptation, takes little or no notice of his Lyes and deluding Appearances; but finding him invading the Prerogative of his Father, and claiming that Divine Worſhip that belongs only to him, he firſt replies with great Indignation, ſaying, *Get thee hence Satan*; or, as St. *Luke* hath it, *Get thee behind me Satan:* both which ſhew our Lord's Abhorrence of his impudent and blaſphemous Propoſal, bidding him be gone, as a wicked Fiend, and to get out of his ſight as an odious and deteſtable Object. After which, with his former Mildneſs he anſwers him a third time out of the Scripture, ſaying, *It is written, Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him*

him only ſhalt thou ſerve. The words are quoted out of the ſame Book of *Deuteronomy*, Chap. 6. ver. 13, 14. where tho the Words vary, the Senſe is the ſame; *Thou ſhalt fear the Lord thy God, and ſerve him, and ſhalt not go after other Gods:* which is, to ſerve and worſhip him only, and not by any ſpecious Offers of worldly Wealth or Honour to be drawn from him.

Thus did our Saviour repel his third Temptation, by opening his falſe Pack, and ſhewing his deceitful Wares; which being the laſt Bait he had to offer, when that would not take, he went his way with ſhame, and rally'd no more. So the next words declare, *Then the Devil leaveth him, and behold! Angels came and miniſtred unto him.* Chriſt had a little before ſaid, *Get thee hence Satan*; the Force of which words finding himſelf unable to reſiſt, he made haſte to ſneak and ſlink away, quitting the field, and leaving Chriſt a compleat Conqueror: by which the Devil ſaw, what he before queſtion'd, that Chriſt was the Son of God. And when this evil Spirit departed, 'tis ſaid the Angels came and miniſtred unto him. We read, when the good Spirit went from *Saul*, an evil Spirit came and troubled him; they could not, it ſeems, abide together: 1 *Sam.* 16. 14. Here, on the contrary, when the evil Spirit departed from Chriſt, the good Spirits the Angels came and comforted him: they congratulated his Victory, and join'd with him in his Triumph over Principalities and Powers, over the Rulers of the Darkneſs of this World, and making all ſpiritual Wickedneſſes to quit their high Places.

This is briefly the Goſpel for this Day, containing our Saviour's Combat with the Devil, together with his abſolute Conqueſt and Triumph over him. From whence we may learn ſome uſeful Leſſons: As,

1. From Chriſt's being tempted of the Devil, we may learn, that the beſt of Men are in this World liable to Temptation. If Chriſt were led into it, his Diſciples may not hope to eſcape it; the Diſciple is not above his Lord: The Devil's Spite is as great to us as it was to him, and the more, for being his Followers; which ſhould make us all to look and prepare for Temptation, that we may be arm'd againſt it come.

From the Time of Chriſt's Temptation, which was immediately after he was by a Voice from Heaven proclaim'd to be the Son of God, we may learn, after any more than ordinary

ordinary Favour or Honour conferr'd upon us, to expect and provide for a Temptation: it was so with Christ here, and with St. *Paul* after, and so it hath been with many eminent Saints since.

Again, Christ's Temptation being just before his Entrance upon the Ministry, may teach the Ministers of Christ at all times, but then especially, to look for Trials, and to arm themselves with Patience, Courage, and Constancy under them.

From the Place of Christ's Temptation, which was a Wilderness, we may learn that Solitariness and great Retirement gives advantage to the Tempter, and exposes us to his Temptations; which should teach Men, especially such as are inclin'd to Melancholy, to avoid solitary Places and too much Retirement, to drive Satan from them, and to associate themselves with wise and vertuous Persons; which will be a good means both to prevent, and to prevail over his Temptations.

Again, From Christ's being led, not voluntarily going into the Wilderness, we may learn not wilfully to run into Temptation, but stay till we are led into it by the Course of Divine Providence; and then we may comfortably expect a happy End and Issue out of it.

Once more, From Christ's being tempted, we may take comfort in his Sympathy with us, and the Succour he will thereby give in our Temptations: *For we have not such a High-Priest* (saith the Apostle) *who cannot be touch'd with the feeling of our Infirmities, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without Sin*; Heb. 4. 15. And *in that he himself hath suffer'd, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted*; Heb. 2. 18. which may teach us to rely on so tender and merciful a Saviour.

2. From Christ's fasting forty Days and forty Nights before his Temptation, we may learn to use Abstinence and Devotion, to prepare us for what may befal us. Our Saviour tells us, that there is one kind of evil Spirits, *that go not out but by Prayer and Fasting*, Mat. 17. 21. And of this sort was that which he encounter'd, which made him fast and pray to be deliver'd from him, to give us an Example to do likewise. *Watch and pray* (saith he) *that ye enter not into Temptation*; or if you are led into it, that you be deliver'd out of it.

3. From Christ's first Temptation to despair of God's Goodness, and to take care of himself by other means; we may

may learn not to diſtruſt the Providence of God, by having recourſe to any indirect ways, but to caſt our care upon him that careth for us; truſting to his Promiſes, and ſaying with our Saviour, that *Man liveth not by Bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God.*

4. From Chriſt's ſecond Temptation to caſt himſelf upon unneceſſary Dangers, upon a Preſumption of an extraordinary Deliverance; we may learn always to keep in God's way, and never preſume upon any Bleſſing or Aſſiſtance out of it. Now God's way is the way of our Calling and of our Duty; in which if we keep, we ſhall do well, for he hath promis'd to ſave and defend us in it, but never out of it: and therefore let us never leave the one, out of any vain Hopes and Dependence upon the other.

5. From Chriſt's refuſing the Devil's ſpecious Offer in the third Temptation, of the Kingdoms of the World and the Glory thereof, upon the Terms of ſerving him; let us learn never to fly to the Devil, or any of his unlawful Ways, to enrich or advance our ſelves. Now thoſe Ways are all the crafty Methods of Fraud, Injuſtice, and Oppreſſion, which ever bring a Curſe inſtead of a Bleſſing.

6. From the Devil's plying our Saviour with one Temptation after another, we learn, that he is a reſtleſs and importunate Enemy; tho he be foil'd at firſt, yet will he rally again, and renew his Temptations, ſtill going up and down ſeeking whom he may devour: which ſhould ſet us always upon our guard againſt him.

7. From Chriſt's ſtill urging Scripture againſt him, ſaying, *It is written*; we learn, that God's Word is the beſt Weapon againſt all the Aſſaults of the Devil, and the beſt Shield to defend us againſt all his fiery Darts.

8. From the Devil's leaving our Saviour after his manful Oppoſition againſt him, we may learn to reſiſt the Devil, and he will flee from us; tho he may not do it preſently, but follow us a while, as he did our Saviour, yet he muſt and will fly at laſt.

Laſtly, From the Angels coming after his departure, and miniſtring to our Saviour, we may learn at all times to keep cloſe unto God, and he will give his Angels charge over us to keep us in all our ways: ſo ſhall we be ſafe in our Perſons, and ſucceſsful in all our Enterprizes; which God grant, *&c.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE XLV.

The EPISTLE for the Second Sunday in *Lent.*

1 Theſſ. iv. 1——9.

We beſeech you, Brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jeſus, that as ye have receiv'd of us, how you ought to walk and to pleaſe God, ſo ye would abound more and more. For ye know what Commandments we gave you, by the Lord Jeſus, &c.

THE Collect for this Day prays to God, who ſeeth that we have no power of our ſelves to help our ſelves, to keep us both outwardly in our Bodies, and inwardly in our Souls, that we may be defended from all Adverſities which may happen to the one, and from all evil Thoughts that may aſſault and hurt the other. In order whereunto,

The Epiſtle for the Day gives us Rules and Directions for the Welfare of both. It begins with a general Exhortation to walk ſo as to pleaſe God, and to abound therein more and more. Where I ſhall obſerve both the Manner and the Matter of the Exhortation.

As for the Manner of the Exhortation, it is with all poſſible Mildneſs and Gentleneſs, in theſe words; *We beſeech you, Brethren, and exhort you by our Lord Jeſus.* Where we have,

1ſt, The kind and endearing Compellation of *Brethren.* He treats us not as Strangers or Enemies, nor yet with the common and ordinary Stile of Friends, but with the loving and obliging Appellation of Brethren, which is one of the neareſt and deareſt of all Relations. Hence St. *Peter* recommending mutual Affection among Chriſtians, bids them to *love as Brethren*, 1 Pet. 3. 8. With this loving Title the Apoſtles frequently addreſs to us, the better to inſtil and inforce their Exhortations upon us. Again,

2dly,

2*dly*, They beſpeak us not ſo much in an imperious, commanding Stile, as in the more eaſy way of Supplication and Intreaty; *We beſeech you, Brethren.* St. *Paul* writing to *Philemon*, tells him, that *tho he might be bold to enjoin him what was convenient*, yet for Love's ſake, he rather beſeeched him, *Philem.* ver. 8, 9. He had Power enough, as an Apoſtle, to enforce his Exhortation, and might have requir'd Obedience from him by the Authority of his Office; yet he ſeems to wave that, and only to draw him by the Cords of Love. Accordingly we find him courting and beſeeching of Chriſtians, in all Places where he came: *We beſeech you* (ſaith he to the *Corinthians*) *in Chriſt's ſtead, to be reconciled unto God.* And to the *Romans*, *We beſeech you* (ſaith he) *by the Mercies of God.* By theſe mild and gentle Methods, he endeavour'd to inſtil and inſinuate his Inſtructions, which many times prevail and work more than the rougher ways of Satire and Invective; as gentle Showers pierce ſooner and ſink deeper than greater Storms. But this is not all, for here are added,

3*dly*, The two great Titles of *our Lord Jeſus*; the one commanding, the other obliging us to obey him; *We beſeech you by the Lord Jeſus:* both which contain Motives ſtrong enough to engage us to the hardeſt Duties. *The Love of Chriſt conſtraineth us* (ſaith the Apoſtle;) and he who hath loved us to the very Death, may even force us to love him again, who hath purchaſed for us Eternal Life. And therefore we find the Apoſtles backing their Exhortations, ſometimes with *the Name of Chriſt*, ſometimes with *the Mercies of Chriſt*, ſometimes with *the Bowels of Chriſt*: and here they urge upon us even the Perſon of Chriſt; *We beſeech you by the Lord Jeſus*, that is, by him who is not only our *Lord and Maſter*, and ſo may challenge our Obedience, but our *Jeſus or Saviour*, and ſo hath infinitely deſerved it.

This is the Manner of the Apoſtle's dealing with theſe *Theſſalonians*, and this is the way of treating with all Chriſtians; not handling them with Sharpneſs and bitter Reflections, which are more apt to provoke, than to perſuade; but wooing them with Entreaties, and endeavouring to win them by all the Endearments of Kindneſs and Chriſtianity. This for the Manner of the Exhortation.

The Matter of it is in the next words; *That as ye have receiv'd of us, how ye ought to walk and to pleaſe God, ſo you would abound more and more.* Where the Apoſtle intimates to us,

Firſt,

Firſt, That we have receiv'd ſufficient Directions how we are to walk, and likewiſe how we may pleaſe God.

For the Firſt, a Chriſtian's Life is here, and often elſewhere in Scripture, ſet forth by Walking; which takes in all his Ways, and comprizes the whole Courſe of his Converſation; all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions, come under this Notion, and fall under theſe Directions. Now the Apoſtle here tells us, that we have receiv'd Inſtructions how we are to walk, and to order all theſe; that is, how we are to order our Thoughts, to govern our Words, and to regulate our Actions: For all which we have the Rule of God's Word, which teaches us how to direct our Courſe, and to order our Converſation aright in all theſe Matters. There we are taught what to believe, as neceſſary to ſalvation, which is ſumm'd up for us in the Apoſtles Creed; what to do, which is ſumm'd up in the Ten Commandments, which lay before us our Duty to God, our Neighbour, and our ſelves; and what we are to pray for, which is contain'd in the Lord's Prayer. By all which we have receiv'd, how we are to walk in the whole Courſe of our Lives.

And likewiſe how we are to pleaſe God, which follows from the former; for when our Ways are right, and directed by theſe Rules, they will be well-pleaſing unto God, and ſurely find Acceptance with him. For ſo the Pſalmiſt tells us, the *Lord ordereth a good Man's Ways, and maketh them acceptable to himſelf*; Pſal. 37. 23. He will certainly accept what is done by his Order, and he cannot but delight in thoſe ways, where the Steps are guided by his Direction.

This is what the Apoſtle thought fit to mind the *Theſſalonians*, and all other Chriſtians of; that he had hid nothing from them that was neceſſary for them to know, but had faithfully reveal'd to them the whole Mind and Will of God. So that it will be in vain to plead Ignorance of their Duty; for Light is come into the World, and to them it was given to know the Myſteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. And therefore having receiv'd this Light, he would have them to work and to act by it, and to walk ſo as to pleaſe God, by keeping ſtill in thoſe Ways that were thus chalk'd out for them; which they could not eaſily miſs, being made ſo plain before them: *For ye know* (ſaith he, in the next Verſe) *what Commandments we gave you by the Lord Jeſus*; which relate only to your good, and ſerve to keep you in that way that leads to Eternal Life; in which therefore we

beſeech

beſeech you to perſiſt, and *to abound more and more.* But beſide this general Exhortation, to walk in the ways of Chriſtianity, the Apoſtle deſcends to two particular Graces or Vertues, *viz.* Purity of Life, and Honeſty in Dealings; adding withal, a Caution againſt the oppoſite Vices, of Uncleanneſs and Diſhoneſty: Which things take up the remaining part of this Epiſtle, and muſt therefore be particularly handled.

And, *1ſt*, for Purity of Life; that is urg'd upon us in the next words; *For this is the Will of God, even your Sanctification, that you ſhould abſtain from Fornication; that every one of you ſhould know how to poſſeſs his Veſſel in Sanctification and Honour.* That this is the Will of God, is very plain from his many Precepts and Exhortations to this purpoſe: *Ye are called unto Holineſs* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *be not ye the Servants of Sin, or Slaves to your Luſt: Without Holineſs no Man can ſee the Lord:* No impure Perſon or Thing can enter his Preſence, or appear in his Sight; 'tis *the pure in Heart* only that *ſhall ſee God*; and *all that have ſuch Hope, muſt purify themſelves even as he is pure. Whatſoever things are pure* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *if there be any Vertue, think on theſe things*; Phil. 4. 8. Be not Partakers or Partners with others in their Vices and Impurities, but *keep thy ſelf pure*, 1 Tim. 5. 22. By theſe and many other places to the ſame purpoſe, 'tis evident, that Purity and Holineſs is the Will and Command of God; 'tis call'd here, our Sanctification: *This is the Will of God, even your Sanctification*; for hereby we dedicate our ſelves unto God and his Service: and whatſoever is thus devoted to him, is ſaid in Scripture to be ſanctified and made holy unto the Lord. This is expreſs'd in the next Verſe, by *poſſeſſing our Veſſel in Sanctification and Honour:* Where by Veſſel, is meant the Veſſel of the Body, in which the Soul lodges, and is the Inſtrument of its Operations in God's Service, as a Veſſel of his Temple. By *poſſeſſing this Veſſel in Sanctification*, is meant, the keeping it clean from all Pollution of filthy Luſts, according to that of *Iſaias*, Chap. 52. 11. *Be ye clean all ye that bear the Veſſels of the Lord.* To this St. *Paul* alludes, when he ſtiles our Bodies *the Temples of the Holy Ghoſt*, 1 Cor. 6. 19. and therefore wills us to ſet them apart from all ſinful and unclean Uſes, and to conſecrate them as a holy and acceptable Sacrifice unto God; that by making them the Veſſels of Grace now, they may be prepar'd and fitted to be made Veſſels of Glory hereafter. This is to poſſeſs our Veſſel in

Sancti-

Sanctification and *Honour*; which will bring Glory to God, and Honour both to our Perſon and Profeſſion.

To this the Apoſtle adds a ſtrict Caution againſt all Uncleanneſs, and the Impurities of ſenſual Luſts; *That ye abſtain from Fornication*, ver. 3. That ye poſſeſs your Veſſels, *not in the Luſt of Concupiſcence, even as the* Gentiles, *that know not God*. By which we are taught to avoid all the Defilements and Pollutions of the Fleſh, which are the Blemiſh, the Scandal, and the Diſgrace of our holy Profeſſion; and to make no Proviſion for the Fleſh, to fulfil the Luſts thereof. Hence we find St. *Peter* earneſtly entreating all Chriſtians, in theſe words; *I beſeech you, Brethren, as Pilgrims and Strangers, abſtain from fleſhly Luſts, which war againſt the Soul*; 1 Pet. 2. 11. And St. *Paul* here beſeeches us to flee all the Vices of the *Gentiles*, and more eſpecially this of Concupiſcence, the moſt noiſom and moſt dangerous of all fleſhly Luſts: and the rather, becauſe theſe were the vile Practices and Idolatries of the ignorant Heathens, who had no Knowledg of the true God, or the true Way of ſerving him: their Gods were as vile and vicious as themſelves, and they worſhipped them accordingly with obſcene and bloody Sacrifices. They had a drunken *Bacchus*, a wanton *Venus*, a thieviſh *Mercury*; and no wonder if the Votaries committed the ſame Vices with their Deities, and ran into thoſe Exceſſes of Luſt and Riot, of which their Gods were both the Patrons and Examples. But the Chriſtians have better learned God and Chriſt, they have attain'd to the Knowledg of the true God, who is of purer Eyes than to behold the leaſt Iniquity; and therefore it muſt be highly unbecoming them, to delight and wallow in ſuch Impurities. This is one Vertue to which we are here exhorted; namely, Purity of Life and Converſation, in oppoſition to all carnal Luſts and Uncleanneſs.

The next is, Honeſty and Juſtice in all our ways, in oppoſition to all Fraud and Falſe-Dealing; Ver. 6. *That no Man go beyond and defraud his Brother in any Matter; becauſe that the Lord is the Avenger of all ſuch, as we alſo have forewarned you and teſtified.* I know ſome interpret theſe words, of ſome inordinate and unnatural Acts of Luſt and Uncleanneſs that were practis'd among the Heathens, not fit to be nam'd, of which God is the Avenger, as he was of the ſame or like Sins on *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*. They that thus interpret the words, were led to it by what went before, and what follows after them. But the moſt natural

ral and easy Sense of these words, which is most generally embrac'd, is a Dissuasive from all Deceit and Dishonesty; which is most properly to go beyond and defraud a Brother in matters of Trade, Bargain, or Commerce; either by falsifying in the Nature, Quality, or Quantity of Goods, or by over-reaching in the Price, or circumventing in the Way and Manner of uttering them. All which are the frequent and wicked Practices of our degenerate Age, wherein the antient Simplicity and Plain-dealing of our Fore-fathers, is in a great measure laid aside, and too many are fallen into the Study and Use of all the Methods of Deceit. Men labour to go beyond their Brother, not in Vertue and Goodness, which would be a noble Contention; but in Craft and Subtilty, which is the baseſt way of circumventing and undermining one another. If you observe the Course of the World, you will find Cunning more studied than a good Conscience, and the Mystery of Trade is become a Mystery of Iniquity. The Wisdom of the Serpent, is prefer'd before the Innocence of the Dove; and more walk in the crooked ways of Falshood and Deceit, than in the strait and plain Paths of Truth and Honesty: Which shews this Advice of the Apostle to be not only seasonable, but highly necessary; *Let no Man go beyond, or defraud his Brother in any Matter:* Where Justice and Honesty reign, there is the Seat of Love, and the Mansion of Peace and Tranquillity. There every one dwells in quiet and easy Habitations, sitting under their own Vines, and reaping the Fruits of their own Labours; whereas, on the contrary, where Fraud and Falshood abound, there are the Seats of Discord and Division, together with the Habitations of Cruelty and Oppression; every one fearing or feeling the sad and mischievous Effects of these things.

But the exceeding great Danger of Over-reaching and Defrauding our Brother, is here set forth by the Vengeance of God that will attend them: *For the Lord is the Avenger of all such*, as practise them; of *which* (saith the Apostle) *we have forewarned you, and testified*; having often assur'd and told you of it. Now God is the Avenger of all Fraud and Dishonesty, both in this Life, and the next: for tho Men may seek by many ways to hide or disguise their false and double Dealing, so as to avoid the Discovery of Men, and to keep out of the Clutches of the Law; yet the Curse of God will assuredly find them out, and punish them sundry ways.

In

In this World, he will puniſh them, either by withdrawing their Subſtance, and taking from them the ill-gotten Goods which they have taken from others, or withdrawing his Bleſſing, and mingling a Curſe with all that is left to them; which will blaſt and imbitter it to them, and deprive them of all the Sweetneſs and Comfort in enjoying of them; or elſe, by bringing upon them the Shame and Ignominy of Cheats, who are hated and ſhun'd by all Mankind.

But if they eſcape all this here, the Vengeance of God will purſue and overtake them in the next World, where they ſhall dearly rue for all their Fraud and Injuſtice; for they ſhall be caſt into that dreadful Dungeon, where is weeping and wailing, and gnaſhing of Teeth; and ſhall there pay for all their ill-gotten Goods to the utmoſt Farthing. St. *James* bids them *go weep and howl, for the Miſeries that are coming upon them; for all their Riches are corrupted, their Garments moth-eaten: their Gold and Silver is canker'd, and the Ruſt of them ſhall be a Witneſs againſt them, and ſhall eat their Fleſh as it were Fire: they have heaped Treaſure for the laſt Day*; which ſhall then be melted down about them, to increaſe their Torment; *James* 5. 1, 2, 3. For while Men are over-reaching one another, the Devil is all the while over-reaching them, and running away with their own Soul. So that to hope to thrive by Deceit and Cozenage, is utterly to miſtake the Meaſures and Methods of Proſperity, which is only promoted by Honeſty and Fair-dealing; for that brings the Bleſſing of God, that maketh rich: and not by the Arts of Fraud and Falſhood; for they bring the Curſe of God, which eats like a Canker, and conſumes all. But to go on: the Apoſtle in the next Verſe, renews his Exhortation to Purity, and reinforces his Caution againſt Uncleanneſs by another Argument, in theſe words; *For God hath not called us unto Uncleanneſs, but unto Holineſs*: meaning, that the Holy Profeſſion we have taken upon us, obliges us to Holineſs, which will adorn and recommend it; and takes us off from all Filthineſs both of Fleſh and Spirit, which tends only to defile and diſgrace it: *The Grace of God that brings Salvation, calls upon us to deny Ungodlineſs, and worldly Luſts, and to live righteouſly, ſoberly, and godly in this preſent World*; which is the beſt means to anſwer the End of our Calling, and to attain to the Reward of it: eſpecially conſidering what the Apoſtle adds in the cloſe; *He therefore that deſpiſeth, deſpiſeth not Man, but God, who hath alſo given unto us his Holy Spirit*: that is, every one

that contemns these Calls and Admonitions of ours, which we receiv'd from Jesus Christ, as we read, ver. 2. all such do not so much contemn Man, but God, whose Calls and Commands they are; for we are his Ambassadors, to deliver his Mind and Message to you, and he hath given us his Holy Spirit to that end: so that to despise us, or the Word deliver'd by us, is to despise God himself who sent us, and to do despite to the Spirit of Grace, which he hath given to us.

This is briefly the Sum of this Day's Epistle, which we are to consider and apply to our selves.

As, *First*, having receiv'd of Christ and his Apostles, how we are to walk, so as to please God and profit our selves; let us learn to walk by those Rules, and to keep in the way they have chalk'd out for us; for that's the Way that leads to Life, tho few will find or walk in it. *He that walketh uprightly*, (saith *Solomon*) *walketh surely*, Prov. 10. 9. He that keeps to the Rules that God and Christ have set him, will be safe in his way, and secure of the End of it. He shall be guided by God's Grace here, and shall not miss of Glory hereafter.

Secondly, From the Apostle's willing us to *abound more and more*, we may learn, not to rest in any lower Degrees of Grace, but to be still going on to Perfection: So St. *Paul* did, who tells us, that he was *still pressing forward to the Mark of the High-Calling of God, in Christ Jesus*; Phil. 3. 14. His Example as well as Command herein, may teach us not to rest in any present Attainments, as if we were good enough already; but to be still going on from one degree of Grace to another, till it be compleated and finish'd in Glory: for to slacken our Course, or to stand still, is to lose ground, and they that do not go forward, generally go backward. There is no abiding at a stay in this Matter; if we do not grow better, we are in great danger of growing worse: for while we rest in the first and lower Degrees of Goodness, we are in the next Neighbourhood to a sinful State, and so are in continual danger of falling back into it. There are bad Inclinations within, that draw strongly unto Evil; and there are many and great Temptations without, that are apt to seduce and prevail upon us: so that if we are but just got out of a State of Sin and Error, and only enter'd upon the Confines of Vertue, we must not stay there for fear of being driven back again, and so

the

the latter End will be worse than the first: but we must be still moving forward, that we may come to a more confirm'd State, and so more out of the Fear and Danger of relapsing. This is what we are here directed to, *viz.* not only to *walk in ways pleasing to God*, but to *abound in so doing more and more*; that is, daily to encrease in Vertue, and to be ever improving and growing in Grace, the better to secure our standing, and to be more and more out of the reach and fear of falling away.

Thirdly, Since Chastity is the Will of God, and all Uncleanness is his Hatred and Abhorrence; let us learn to practise the one, and to avoid the other: let us hate the very *Garment spotted with the Flesh*, and keep our selves *undefiled from the World*, that others beholding our chaste Conversation coupled with fear, may have nothing to say against us; but rather report, that God is in us of a Truth.

Fourthly, Since God is the Avenger of all Fraud and Falsedealing, let us learn to walk honestly as in the Day, and renounce all the Deeds of Darkness and Dishonesty; let us not go beyond or defraud our Brother in any matter, which we see will draw upon us the Vengeance of God, both in this World, and that which is to come. Remember the time is coming, when all Disguises will be pull'd off, and all the evil Arts of enriching our selves and spoiling our Neighbour, will be laid open and expos'd before Angels and Men, to our endless Shame and Confusion [illegible]. Let us then amend all such Practices in time, and [illegible] thing but what we may own now, and will stand [illegible] of the last Day. In a word, being taught of God [illegible] is necessary to Salvation; let us learn and practise [illegible] dom that is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, and full of all Good-works. Let us not defile our Bodies with fleshly Lusts, nor our Fingers with filthy Lucre; but let us keep our selves pure from all Iniquity, that we may be at present fitted for, and at last receiv'd into the blessed Mansions of Peace and Purity. Which God grant, for the sake of Jesus Christ, *&c.* Amen.

DISCOURSE XLVI.

The GOSPEL for the Second Sunday in *Lent*.

St. Matthew xv. 21——29.

Jesus went thence, and departed into the Coasts of Tyre *and* Sidon. *And behold, a Woman of* Canaan *came out of the same Coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have Mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of* David, *my Daughter is grievously vexed with a Devil*, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day, contains a Miracle done by our Saviour upon a certain Demoniack, or one possess'd with the Devil, whom he exorcis'd and dispossess'd with a word's speaking. The Manner and other Circumstances whereof, are hereafter related to us.

The Account of it begins thus: *Jesus went thence*, that is, from the Land of *Genesareth*, where they brought unto him all that were diseased, whom he healed of their several Maladies; and as many as touched the Hem of his Garment were made perfectly whole, as we read in the foregoing Chapter. From thence *he departed into the Coasts of* Tyre *and* Sidon, two Cities in *Phœnicia*, bordering upon *Canaan*, famous for Merchandize and Traffick, especially in some Commodities. Our Saviour being come thither, *Behold, a Woman of* Canaan *came out of the same Coasts*. St. *Mark* stiles her *a* Greek, *a* Syrophenician *by Nation*; Mark 7. 26. She was not of the *Jewish* Profession, but by Religion a Heathen, born near the Sea-shore called *Phenicia* and *Canaan*.

This Heathen Woman hearing the Fame of Christ's Miracles, and that he was come into those Parts, went on purpose to him; and cried with a loud Voice unto him, saying, *Have Mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of* David. This was the usual Form of Prayer and Salutation, with which all the humble Petitioners address'd to him: which

few

few Words when coming from the Heart, prevail'd more with him than the tedious Harangues of Hypocrites. They contain a hearty Acknowledgment of his Power and Goodness, and that coming from the Stock and Lineage of *David*, he was the true Messias and Saviour of the World.

But what was her Prayer and Request to him? Why that, as the following Words declare, was in the behalf of her *Daughter* who (she said) *was grievously vex'd with a Devil*; hoping and desiring to find some Pity and Relief from him.

But before we go any farther, 'twill be requisite to enquire what is here meant by being *vexed with a Devil*; who they were; and whether there be any such now in our days. For the

1st, To be vexed with a Devil, is to be possess'd with an evil Spirit; of which we find frequent mention in the New Testament. *Mat.* 4. 24. we read of Persons *possess'd with the Devil*; as also *Mat.* 8. 16. with many other places. Sometimes we read of Persons possess'd with evil Spirits, sometimes with unclean Spirits, sometimes with Spirits or Devils blind and dumb, and the like; Instances whereof we have many in the Gospel.

Now they that were thus possess'd are said to be troubled with evil Spirits, and here to be *vexed with a Devil*. They are in the Gospel call'd δαιμονιζόμενοι, ἐνεργούμενοι, and σεληνιαζόμενοι, *i. e.* Demoniacks, Lunaticks, and possess'd Persons.

But how came those Possessions so frequent among the *Jews*, which were God's own People; and in our Saviour's time too, when we find or hear little or nothing of them in our days? Why, that (as a very Learned Man hath told us) may proceed from a Mistake of Words; for he conceives the same thing to be still among us, and hath been in all Times and Places, tho they are differently expres's'd, and call'd by other Names. To clear which, he gives it as his Judgment, that the Demoniacks and possess'd Persons in the Gospel, were no other than such as we call *Madmen and Lunaticks*; at least that we comprehend them under those Names. This he proves at large by the Testimony of the Scriptures, by the Antient Fathers and Ecclesiastical Writers, and likewise by the Writings of Learned *Gentiles*.

For the Testimony of Scripture, he cites first that of St. *John*; *He hath a Devil, and is mad*, John 10. 20. where the latter Words are an Explication of the former; and his having a Devil, is the same thing with his being mad. And indeed he that considers the wild Speeches and

Actions that proceed from Men under ſuch Frenzys, contrary to all Reaſon, Senſe, and the Uſe of other Men, can think them mov'd by no other than an evil Spirit. Beſide, the extraordinary Strength that is found in ſuch Perſons, beyond others or themſelves in their right Wits, can be aſcrib'd to no other. And here we may diſtinguiſh between *Melancholia* and *Mania*, both which imply a Diſturbance of the Mind, or an Alienation of the Underſtanding; the one is commonly attended with Fear, Silence, Sadneſs, and Retiredneſs; the other with Rage, Raving, Fury, and Actions ſuitable to them: And both are ſaid in Scripture to be troubled and acted by evil Spirits. *Saul*'s Melancholy is attributed to this; for 'tis ſaid that *an evil Spirit from the Lord troubled him.* And in the Goſpel the ſame is attributed to Lunacy, and the Power of the Devil; as appears by another Place urg'd by this Learned Author in the New Teſtament; and that is *Mat.* 17. 14, 15. where 'tis ſaid that a certain Man came to our Saviour, and kneeling down, ſaid unto him, *Lord have mercy on my Son, for he is lunatick and ſore vexed, and oftimes falleth into the Fire and oft into the Water.* That this Lunatick was a Demoniack, or a Perſon poſſeſs'd with an evil Spirit, is evident by St. *Luke*; who ſpeaking of this ſame Perſon, ſaith, *Lo! a Spirit taketh him, and he ſuddenly cryeth out, and it teareth him, that he foameth again, and bruiſing him, hardly departeth from him*; Luke 9. 39. And St. *Matthew* expreſly declares of this Perſon, that our Saviour *rebuk'd the Devil, and he departed out of him*, Chap. 17. 18. Both which Places make it apparent, that he was poſſeſs'd of the Devil, who caſt him ſometimes into Fits of Phrenzy, and ſometimes into Fits of the Epilepſy or Falling-ſickneſs; and was of the ſame kind with that which ſeizeth Madmen, Lunaticks, and Epilepticks to this day.

This our Learned Author farther proves by the Teſtimony of the Fathers, particularly *Juſtin Martyr*, who writing of Perſons ſeiz'd with evil Spirits, which ſometimes caſt and tumbled them on the Ground, ſaith, οὓς δαιμονιολήπτους καὶ μανιώδεις καλοῦσι πάντες, *i. e.* whom all call'd Demoniacks or Madmen; making them Terms ſynonymous, and ſignifying the ſame thing. And we find a Canon in the Apoſtolical Conſtitutions, that if any have a Devil or is mad, let him not be put in Orders, or be admitted to pray with the Faithful.

Laſtly, He proves this by the Teſtimony of the *Gentiles*, who generally had the like Apprehenſions of Madmen and Luna-

Lunaticks, as Perſons acted by evil Spirits. Hence they called them *Larvati*, which is the ſame with *Larvis*, *i. e. Dæmoniacis actis*, Men acted by evil Spirits or Dæmons. So *Feſtus* deſcribes *Larvati*, by *furioſi & mente moti, quaſi Larvis exterriti*; that is, furious Perſons, or Madmen, frighted out of their wits by Ghoſts and Hobgoblins. From all which he perhaps wiſely enough infers, that the Demoniacks and poſſeſs'd Perſons we readof in the Goſpel, were the ſame with Madmen, Lunaticks and Epilepticks in our days. I have ſpoken the more of this, upon the occaſion of this Woman's Daughter being *vexed with a Devil*, to give a little Light into thoſe Demoniacks, and Perſons poſſeſs'd with evil Spirits, of whom we find ſo frequent mention in the Holy Scriptures.

But to go on; this Woman cry'd to our Saviour, *O Lord thou Son of* David, *my Daughter is grievouſly vexed with a Devil.* Where tho the Words ſeem to be a bare relating of her Caſe, without any Requeſt or Petition in her behalf, yet the plain Meaning undoubtedly was, that he would exerciſe his Divine Power in curing of her.

But what Reply did our Saviour make to her? Why, the next Words tell us, that *he anſwer'd her not a Word.* Strange! that he who was upon all occaſions ſo forward to do good, and to heal all manner of Diſtempers, ſhould be here ſo backward, as not to give her a Word in anſwer. The reaſon hereof we ſhall ſee by and by: in the mean time ſhe deſiſted not from her Cry, but rather heighten'd her Importunity; inſomuch that *his Diſciples came and beſought him, ſaying, Send her away, for ſhe crieth after us:* that is, Send her away ſatisfy'd by granting her Requeſt, that we may be rid of her Importunity. But *Jeſus anſwer'd and ſaid unto them, I am not ſent, but unto the loſt Sheep of the Houſe of* Iſrael. This he gives as the reaſon of his not hearkning to the Petition of the Woman, or the Motion of the Diſciples; becauſe the Meſſage on which he came was chiefly directed to the *Jews*, and confin'd to the Houſe of *Iſrael*, who were his own peculiar People both by Deſcent and many other Privileges: theſe were his firſt Flock, tho many of them had err'd and ſtray'd from him like loſt Sheep; yet his Errand was to reduce and bring them back to the Fold, to lead them to Repentance, and to do his Miracles to and before them. His Commiſſion yet was not extended to the *Gentiles*; and therefore this Woman of *Canaan*, being a Heathen, and out of the Pales of the

Church, had no ſhare either in his Doctrine or Miracles; for *Jeſus Chriſt was the Miniſter of Circumciſion* (ſaith St. *Paul*) *for the Truth of God, to confirm the Promiſes made unto the Fathers*; Rom. 15. 8. For this reaſon it was, that our Saviour anſwer'd nothing to the Prayer of the Woman, or the Relief of her Daughter: and yet this was done more for the Trial of her Faith, than with a Deſign to ſend her away unſatisfy'd.

However that be, *She came again to him, and worſhipped him, ſaying, Lord help me.* She perſiſted in her Prayer, and ceas'd not her Cries and Tears, but fell down on her knees, and beſought him to have pity on her, and relieve her Child.

But our Saviour ſeem'd ſtill to turn a deaf Ear, and to give her not ſo much a Reply as a Repulſe; for *he anſwer'd and ſaid, It is not meet to take the Childrens Bread, and caſt it to Dogs.* Where the *Jews*, or the Houſe of *Iſrael*, are call'd the Children, and the *Gentiles* or Heathens are call'd by the Name of Dogs; and the Senſe of our Saviour in thoſe words is, that 'tis not fit to work thoſe Miracles and Cures on the Heathens, who are profane and unclean Perſons, which are deſign'd only for the *Jews*, the adopted Children and ſanctify'd People of God. The confining of which great Privilege to the *Iſraelites*, and excluding the *Gentiles* from it, being expreſs'd here proverbially, by not caſting the Childrens Bread unto Dogs; the Woman in the Strength of her Faith replies to him in the ſame figurative and proverbial ſtrain, *Truth, Lord, yet the Dogs eat of the Crumbs which fall from the Maſter's Table.* Which words are a deep Confeſſion of her own Unworthineſs, and a humble caſting of her ſelf upon the Bounty and Goodneſs of the Lord, for the obtaining of ſome Degrees at leaſt of Mercy and Favour at his hands. *Truth, Lord,* (ſaith ſhe) that is, I muſt acknowledg that things are as thou haſt ſaid, that the *Iſraelites* were of old the only ſelect People of God, dignify'd with many high and noble Privileges above others; yet I hope the poor *Gentiles* are not wholly caſt out of Favour, and left to deſpair of all Mercy, but that there may be a Door of Hope open'd to them, that by fervent Prayer knock at it, and that the infinite Love of God hath ſome Mercy in ſtore for all his Creatures: for tho the Children alone ſit at the Father's Table, and are fed firſt with the beſt Proviſions, yet the Servants are admitted to wait and eat after them; yea, the very Dogs are allow'd to lick

up

up what is left, and to feed upon the Remainders and Scatterings of the Table: and therefore we trust that the *Gentiles* may much more be admitted to some small share in the Mercies of the *Jews*.

But what was the Issue of all this Importunity? Why, *Jesus then answer'd and said unto her, O Woman, great is thy Faith! be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her Daughter was made whole from that very hour.* Where our Saviour highly magnify'd her Faith, which carry'd her above and beyond all Difficulties, and therefore presently granted all that she desir'd. For he no sooner spake the word, but the evil Spirit left her, and her Daughter from that very instant of time was made whole. Great indeed is the Strength of Faith, especially when attended with Perseverance and Constancy; it can remove Mountains, and no Infirmities or evil Spirits are able to stand or stay before it, for it hath the Divine Power by Promise annex'd to it, and is even arm'd with Omnipotence. Now great Faith is where there are least Hopes and most Opposition, and where Love and the Will have the greatest hand in the Composition. To such Believers, God Almighty seems in a manner indebted, and counts himself engag'd to perform what they reasonably desire. Such was the Faith of this *Canaanitish* Woman, and such was the Effect and Issue that proceeded from it.

This is in short the Substance of the Gospel for this Day, from whence we may make the ensuing Lessons the Subject of this Day's Meditations. As,

1st, From this Woman of *Canaan*'s having recourse to our Saviour, to have her Daughter cured of being vexed with the Devil, we may learn where to go, to be preserv'd from the Power of Satan's Temptations. *The Son of God was manifested to this purpose, that he might destroy the Works of the Devil*; which he accordingly did, by subduing his Kingdom, and weakning the Force of all his Temptations. And therefore we must betake our selves to him, to be deliver'd from them, who is alone able to do it for us. Christ himself told St. *Peter*, that *Satan had desir'd to winnow him as Wheat*, but he had *pray'd for him, that his Faith should not fail*: and that prov'd to be the best Prop and Support of it. When the Seventy return'd with Joy, saying, *Lord, even the Devils are subject unto us through thy Name*; he reply'd, *I beheld Satan like Lightning fall from Heaven*;

Luke

Luke 10.17,18. which ſignify'd the dethroning of the Devil, and the diſſeizing ſpiritual Wickedneſſes of their high Places. All which, together with the frequent Diſpoſſeſſings we read of them, ſhew us our Saviour's compleat Victory and Power over them. So that now we are bid only to *reſiſt the Devil, and he will flee from us:* and this Reſiſtance muſt be by Prayer and Faith, which ſecure to us a Deliverance from him; for greater is he that is for us, than he that is againſt us.

2*dly*, From our Saviour's anſwering this Woman of *Canaan* not a word, and ſhewing little or no regard to her firſt Suit, we may learn not to be diſcourag'd, if our Prayers are not always preſently anſwer'd. He would not grant this Woman's Requeſt immediately, becauſe he had a mind to try her Faith, and to heighten her Importunity. God Almighty hath many times very wiſe and weighty Reaſons for the denying or delaying the Grant of our Petitions: ſometimes we are apt to ask things, that would be more pernicious than profitable for us; and then the Mercy is greater in the Denial, than it would be in the Grant. Sometimes we are not ſufficiently ſenſible either of the Worth or the Want of what we ask; and then it is fit he ſhould give us ſome time to conſider what 'tis we ask, before he anſwer us. Sometimes we are not ſo well ſatisfy'd of his Power and Readineſs to help us, as we ſhould be, nor ſo fully convinc'd of our Dependence upon him, as we ought; and then 'tis no wonder if he defer his Anſwers a while, till we have better learnt theſe Leſſons. Sometimes again he ſeems not to hear, becauſe he would have us cry a little louder; and perhaps denies the firſt time, to ſee whether we will continue our Suit and increaſe our Fervency; intending to double his Returns according to our Requeſts, and to caſt in a vantage Bleſſing for the Importunity. If our Petitions be not preſently anſwer'd, we were beſt look into our ſelves, and examine the Cauſe; and 'tis ten to one but we may find it to proceed from one or more of theſe Reaſons.

3*dly*, From our Saviour's granting her Requeſt at laſt, we may learn the Efficacy and ſure Succeſs of fervent and perſevering Prayer. *The effectual fervent Prayer of the Righteous* (ſaith St. *James*) *availeth much*: it conquers all Difficulties, and ſurmounts all Oppoſition. But then it muſt be accompany'd with Faith, and a firm Perſuaſion of the Power and Goodneſs of him we addreſs to: ſo St. *James* adds,

adds, *Let him ask in Faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavers is like a Wave of the Sea driven with the Wind and toſſed: let not that Man think, that he ſhall receive any thing of the hands of God.* James 5. 16. A double-minded Man is unſtable in all his ways, and conſequently unſucceſsful in all his Petitions. If then we would obtain our Requeſts, we muſt, with this Woman of *Canaan, continue inſtant in Prayer, watching thereunto with all Perſeverance.* We muſt never give out through Wearineſs, nor ceaſe asking till we receive, and be daily lifting up pure Hearts and Hands without Wrath and Doubting: And then we ſhall not, in God's due time, miſs of an Anſwer, nor want what is convenient for us.

4thly, From Chriſt's declaring his Miſſion to be only to the loſt Sheep of *Iſrael*, and that ſhewing kindneſs to the *Gentiles* was the caſting the Childrens Bread unto Dogs; we may learn to magnify and adore the infinite Goodneſs of God, in enlarging his Commiſſion, and extending it to the *Gentiles* alſo: whereby we, who were Aliens and Outcaſts, are now taken within the Verge of his Care, and the Pales of his Church. We that are of the Race of the *Gentiles*, are now no longer reckon'd among the Dogs, that are fed only with Scraps and Offals; but are taken into the number of Children, and ſo intitled to the Bread of Life that belongs to them. God the Father promis'd of old to *give his Son the Heathen for his Inheritance, and the uttermoſt Ends of the Earth for his Poſſeſſion*; Pſal. 2. which Promiſe was perform'd by the Calling in of the *Gentiles* to all the Privileges of the Goſpel, of which we at this day are the happy Partakers. So that now the Partition-Wall being broken down, and thereby being all united in the ſame Goſpel-Covenant, there is neither *Jew* nor *Gentile*, Bond or Free, Male or Female, for we are all one in Chriſt Jeſus.

In ſhort, the Goſpel for this Day gives us to underſtand the univerſal and undiſtinguiſh'd Love of Chriſt to all Mankind; that all who by inſtant Prayer and a ſtedfaſt Faith adhere to him, ſhall not fail of an Anſwer to all their needful and reaſonable Requeſts; and that in every Nation, he that feareth God and worketh Righteouſneſs, ſhall be accepted of him: which is abundant Encouragement in all times, and upon all neceſſary occaſions, to have recourſe to him; which that we may all do, the Grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the Love of God, and the Fellowſhip of the Holy Ghoſt, be with us evermore. *Amen.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE XLVII.

The EPISTLE for the Third Sunday in *Lent*.

Ephes. v. 1——15.

Be ye therefore Followers of God as dear Children; and walk in Love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an Offering and Sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling Savour: But Fornication and all Uncleanness, and Covetousness, let it not be once named among you, &c.

THE Collect for this Day beseeches Almighty God to look upon the hearty Desires of his humble Servants, and to stretch forth the Right Hand of his Majesty, to be our Defence against all our Enemies.

To which end, the Epistle for the Day exhorts us to pursue the things that are good, and then we shall be protected from all Evil: according to that of St. *Peter*, *Who is he that will harm you, if ye are Followers of that which is good?*

The Epistle, which we are now to treat of, contains the two great Parts or Branches of every Christian's Duty, *viz.* What he is to follow, and what to avoid.

For the *First*, The Beginning of it will direct us; *Be ye Followers of God, as dear Children.* To be a Follower of any, is to give up our selves to his Guidance and Conduct, and to be led by his Direction.

To be a Follower of Christ, is to observe his Doctrine, and to tread in the steps of his Example. When Christ call'd any to be his Disciples, his usual Form or Phrase was, *Follow me:* and from thence they were stil'd Christ's Followers. The first that were thus call'd by him, were the twelve Apostles, whom he took from their several Trades and Callings, and made them the Attendants on his Person, the Hearers of his Doctrine, and the Eye-witnesses of his Mira-

Miracles; to the end that they ſhould not only learn themſelves, but teach others, and propagate his Doctrine in all parts of the World: And all that have been thus taught and converted by them, have ever ſince been call'd Chriſt's Followers. Their Duty is to learn of him as a Scholar does of his Maſter, which they may well do, he being a Teacher come from God, and ſo the beſt and ableſt of all Maſters. This he expects and calls for from all his Followers: *Learn of me*, ſaith he, Mat. 11. *And let the ſame Mind be in you, as was in Chriſt Jeſus.* Neither is it enough barely to learn his Doctrine; but to be a Follower of Chriſt, is to follow his Example, and to do as he did. Hence we are bid to be *holy, as he that hath call'd us is holy*; and to *walk even as he walked:* not that we can keep pace with him in all his ways, or come up to the exact and inimitable pitch of his Holineſs, but that we endeavour to be as like him, and to come as near him as we may. This is to be Followers of God *as dear Children*; for as Children commonly reſemble their Parents in the Lineaments of the Face and the Qualities of the Mind, even ſo we are to labour after the greateſt Likeneſs to our heavenly Father, and to be made conformable to the Image of his Son. Moreover, as Children are apt to follow the Ways and Actions of their Parents, ſo ſhould we imitate our Father which is in Heaven, and labour as much to be Followers of him, as dear Children are wont to be of their tender Parents; being willing to learn of him, and to be guided by him, and in all things living and acting like the Children of the Moſt High.

But wherein are we to be *Followers of God as dear Children?* Why, that the next words will inform us; *And walk in Love, as Chriſt alſo hath loved us, and given himſelf for us, an Offering and Sacrifice unto God, of a ſweet-ſmelling Savour.* Where the great thing in which we are call'd upon to follow him, is in the Grace of Love, the darling Attribute of God, and the principal Ray and Perfection of the Divine Nature: for *God is Love* (ſaith the beloved Diſciple) *and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God.* This he hath in many ways expreſs'd towards us; *God ſo loved the World* (ſaith St. *John*) *that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.* And *Chriſt ſo loved us* (ſaith our Apoſtle) *that he gave himſelf for us*, as an *Offering* for our Sins, and *a Sacrifice unto God* for their Expiation; which, like the Incenſe

Incenſe burnt on the Altar, yields a ſweet Perfume, and ſends up a grateful Savour in the Noſtrils of God. This tranſcendent Love of Chriſt to Mankind, is not only to be remember'd, but in ſome meaſure to be requited and return'd by us. Love, we ſay, is the Loadſtone of Love, and draws with a natural and pleaſing Violence; and the ſtronger the Love is, the ſtronger ſhould the Attractives be: and therefore that ſacred Fire that burnt in Chriſt's Breaſt towards us, ſhould kindle the flames of Divine Love in our Breaſt towards him. Indeed, if we conſider what he is in himſelf, a Being of infinite Excellencies and Perfections; and likewiſe what he is towards us, a God of inexpreſſible Compaſſion and Kindneſs; we ſhall find ſuch powerful Charms as are hard to be reſiſted, Endearments ſtrong enough to melt a Heart of Stone, and to conſtrain the moſt obdurate Nature to love him.

And this Love of him is to be extended to and expreſs'd by our Love to the Brethren: ſo St. *John* argues, *Beloved, if God ſo loved us, we ought alſo to love one another.* His Love to us is to be both the Motive and the Pattern of our Love to our Neighbour, and muſt teach us to bear the ſame good-will to one another, as he hath ſhew'd towards us. Moreover, to *walk in Love*, is to continue, and to be ſtill going on in Acts of Kindneſs and Beneficence; and to *love as Chriſt hath loved us*, is to extend it as far, and to the ſame Perſons as he did: that is, by his Example to love our Enemies, to do good to them that hate us, to pray for them that deſpitefully uſe and perſecute us; which will ſhew us to be the Children of the Moſt High, who is kind to the Unthankful and the Evil, as we read, *Mat.* 5. *latt. end.* & *Luke* 6. 35.

Thus we ſee how and wherein we are to be Followers of God as dear Children, which is chiefly in the great Acts and Duty of Love.

The *Second* Part of the Epiſtle ſhews us, what we are to avoid, to that end. And that is, all the ſinful Luſts of the Fleſh; together with all the evil Counſel and Company that lead to them, as the following Verſes declare.

Againſt the former we are warn'd, *ver.* 3, 4. *But Fornication, and all Uncleanneſs, or Covetouſneſs, let it not be once named among you, as becometh Saints; neither Filthineſs, nor fooliſh Talking or Jeſting, whith are not convenient: but rather giving of Thanks.* Where we have a ſtrict Charge and Caution

tion againſt all obſcene Words and Actions, as altogether unbecoming the Name and Profeſſion of Chriſtians, who are call'd to higher and better things. And all that will be true Followers of the holy Jeſus, muſt carefully ſhun and avoid them. Indeed, the Fleſh is a home-bred Enemy, or a Traitor within us, which is moſt apt to betray and beguile us. And the Corruption of our Nature is ſuch, that all our Care is little enough to watch and arm us againſt this Sin that doth ſo eaſily beſet us. Hence it is that we find ſo many Warnings againſt it in Holy Scripture, which are now ſingled out and read to us at this Seaſon, being a time of more than ordinary Strictneſs and Mortification.

But the better to enforce theſe Warnings upon us, the Apoſtle adds in the next words; *For this you know, that no Whoremonger, nor unclean Perſon, nor covetous Man, who is an Idolater, hath any Inheritance in the Kingdom of Chriſt, or of God.* Where he ſeeks to deter Men from theſe Vices, by the certain Puniſhment that will unavoidably attend them; by which they will be utterly excluded from all hopes of Favour, and be doom'd to lie for ever under the Frowns and juſt Indignation of Heaven. And leſt any ſhould feed and flatter themſelves with vain hopes of eſcaping theſe things, the Apoſtle ſubjoins; *Let no Man deceive you with vain words, for becauſe of theſe things cometh the Wrath of God upon the Children of Diſobedience:* Let none beguile you with any Allurements or falſe Opinions, that theſe are but ſlight things, and will be eaſily over-look'd; for theſe are the very Sins that brought Plagues upon *Sodom*, and will bring the like, or greater Vengeance upon thoſe that practiſe them. Neither is there any way of eſcaping thoſe Evils, but by hearkning to the Apoſtle's Advice, in the next words; *Be ye not therefore Partakers with them:* For if ye conſent to and partake in their Sins, you muſt in their Puniſhment too. To prevent which, he goes on to mind theſe *Epheſians* of the happy Change made in them, by receiving the Goſpel, and the many Benefits they had obtain'd; *For ye were ſometimes Darkneſs, but now are ye Light in the Lord; walk as Children of the Light.* Where we may obſerve,

1*ſt*, The Miſery of their Natural and *Gentile* State; *Ye were ſometimes Darkneſs.*

2*dly*, The comfortable Condition to which they were tranſlated; *But now are ye Light in the Lord.*

3*dly*, The

3*dly*, The Uſe and Application they were to make of it; therefore *walk as Children of the Light.* Theſe things containing the Sum of this Epiſtle, and affording proper Matter for our Meditations upon it, muſt be a little particularly conſider'd. And,

1*ſt*, Of the dark and diſconſolate State of theſe *Epheſians*, before they receiv'd the Goſpel; *Ye were ſometimes Darkneſs:* which was ſo black and diſmal, that it ſuffic'd him not to ſay, Ye were ſometimes blind or dark, but ye were Darkneſs it ſelf. And that denotes, the Ignorance, the Danger, and the Diſconſolateneſs of their Heathen State.

As for their Ignorance, that was exceeding groſs, a Darkneſs that might be felt: as appear'd in their Ignorance of God, of themſelves, and of a Future State; in all which they were extremely in the dark, or at beſt had very obſcure and confuſs'd Notions of them. Their groſs Ignorance of God was ſeen in the Nature and Number of their Deities, which they multiply'd exceedingly; inſomuch, that there was no kind of Creature, how vile and deſpicable ſoever, upon whom they beſtow'd not Divine Honours: there was ſcarce an Herb in the Field but grew into a God, and their Gardens were not more fruitful in Plants, than they were in Deities; ſome offer'd Incenſe to a noiſom Weed, and others ſhed religious Tears before the Leek and Onion: *O ſanctæ gentes! quibus hæc naſcuntur in hortis numina*; as the Poet derides them. And generally, the wiſeſt of them fell down before Idols, the Workmanſhip of their own Hands. Thus as God made Man in his Image, ſo they made God in their own; yea, many of them deify'd their very Sickneſſes and Diſeaſes, and Men became Idolaters to their own Infirmities. So groſs was their Ignorance of God, that the Apoſtle truly ſaid, they *were without God in the World.* Neither was their Knowledg of themſelves much better, as appears by their vain and various Conjectures of the Original of Mankind; whom they conceiv'd at firſt to ſpring out of the Earth, like Herbs or Plants, by no other Power, than that of Nature. Some have thought, they ſtarted up out of the Earth by parts and piece-meal; and have reported, that at *Grand-Cairo* in *Egypt* have been ſeen Feet and Arms ariſing out of the Ground, which by the animating Power of the Sun, grew up and were form'd into Bodies. Thus the greateſt Philoſophers among the Heathens were in the dark, as to their firſt Production; and tho they found themſelves to be Men, yet knew not how

how or whence they came ſo. Neither was their Knowledg greater

As to any Future State, or what ſhould become of them after Death, being very much at a loſs about the Immortality of the Soul. *Socrates*, who was reputed the wiſeſt among them, ſpeaks but very darkly and doubtfully in this matter; for being ask'd at his Death, what he thought of future Life, reply'd, it was ἄδηλον παντὶ, πλὴν τῷ θεῷ; that is, unknown to any but to God. They dreamt indeed of *Elyſian* Fields and pleaſant Groves, to recreate and ſolace the Minds of the Vertuous and the Innocent with endleſs Delight; and likewiſe of dark and diſmal Shades, where the guilty Souls ſhall be haunted with perpetual Fears and Terrors. But theſe were faint Conjectures of they knew not what, and ſerv'd only to ſhew, that a Heathen State was a State of groſs Ignorance and Darkneſs.

And ſo it is likewiſe for the Danger and Diſconſolateneſs of it: he that walketh in Darkneſs, knoweth not whither he goeth; he ſeeth not his way, and ſo is liable to ſtumbling and many a dangerous Fall: and as natural Blindneſs in our bodily Eyes, is a Calamity that expoſeth to great Harm; ſo ſpiritual Blindneſs and Darkneſs in the Eyes of the Mind, lays Men open to far greater Evils. And 'tis no great wonder, if the Heathens, under this ſpiritual Blindneſs, wallow'd in all manner of Uncleanneſs; *For 'tis a ſhame even to ſpeak of thoſe things, which were done of them in ſecret*, ver. 12. And ſo did ſome of you (ſaith he) whilſt you remain'd in that dark and gloomy State. Beſide, Darkneſs you know is very diſconſolate, and expoſes to great Terrors and Affrightments: The Night ſuggeſts many Fears, every little Noiſe ſeems to be the Alarm of an Enemy, and every Motion like the Approach of a Thief. Fears or Frights are the Companions of Darkneſs, which give Diſturbance to the Mind, and fill it with a thouſand Bugbears. But ſpiritual Darkneſs is attended with Terrors of a higher and worſe nature; it alarms the Soul with the ſad Apprehenſions of Guilt, and fills it with Fears of the Wrath of God due to it; and that makes it like the troubled Sea, that cannot reſt.

2*dly*, This was the ſad and gloomy State of theſe *Epheſians* before they embrac'd Chriſtianity, of which the Apoſtle minds them, in theſe words; *Ye were ſometimes Darkneſs, but now* (ſaith he) *are ye Light in the Lord.* And this will lead to the happy Change made in them, by their being

converted to Chriſtianity, and the great Benefits both they and we enjoy by the Light of the Goſpel; for that diſpels the former Darkneſs of Paganiſm and Idolatry, ſcatters all the Clouds of Error and Ignorance, and ſets Life and Immortality in their true Light. The Goſpel diſcovers to us the Danger and Deformity of the Vices and leud Practices of the Heathens, which were not ſo fully known to them before: ſo that whatever Plea of Ignorance they may make to excuſe their Impieties, we can have no cloke for our Sins; for we are now enlighten'd with the Knowledg of God, of our ſelves, and of the Means of being happy. Beſide, the Terrors of Sin and Guilt are now in a great meaſure remov'd, by the Merits and Satisfaction of Chriſt; and Repentance is become as acceptable as Innocence: The Spirit of Fear and Bondage is gone, and we have receiv'd the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, *Abba, Father*. So that *Light is ſown for the Righteous, and joyful Gladneſs for the True-hearted*. And being in all theſe Senſes turn'd from Darkneſs to Light,

3*dly*, The Apoſtle's Exhortation is, therefore *walk as Children of Light:* whereby he thus beſpeaks the *Epheſians*; However theſe black and abominable Vices are rife among the benighted *Gentiles*, and you your ſelves liv'd in the committing of them, whilſt ye were in that dark and gloomy State; yet now being become Chriſtians, and having by the Light of the Goſpel, the Odiouſneſs of thoſe Sins ſo clearly expos'd to your view, flee them as ſo many Brats and Imps of Darkneſs, and walk as Children of the Light, and of the Day; live as becometh the Goſpel of Chriſt, doing nothing that may any way blemiſh or diſparage it, and doing all things that may tend to adorn and recommend it. Walk honeſtly as in the Day, and act all things as in the ſight of God and Men; avoid thoſe things that ſeek a Covert to hide their Obliquity, and ſhun all the Deeds of Darkneſs, that are put to ſhame and diſcomfited by the Light. Follow, as the next Verſe directs,

The Fruit of the Spirit, which is in all Goodneſs, and Righteouſneſs, and Truth, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. Theſe things can bear the Light, and find the Acceptance and Approbation of God and Men.

But have no Fellowſhip with the unfruitful Works of Darkneſs, but rather reprove them, ver. 11. Mix not your ſelves with wicked Workers, nor be a Companion with any in Evil. So St. *Paul* exhorts, 1 *Cor.* 5. 11. *Not to keep Company if any*

be

be a Fornicator, or Covetous, or an Idolater, or Railer, or a Drunkard, or Extortioner, with ſuch a one, no not to eat; that is, not to ſhew any liking to ſuch Practices, nor contract any Intimacy with them that uſe them. Theſe the Apoſtle ſtiles unfruitful Works of Darkneſs, in oppoſition to the Fruits of the Spirit before-mention'd, which bring forth Glory, and Honour, and Eternal Life; whereas, theſe yield nothing but Miſery, and Shame, and Eternal Death. And therefore we ſhould be ſo far from having any Fellowſhip or Delight, that we ſhould rather reprove and deteſt ſuch vile Practices: *for 'tis a ſhame* (as the Apoſtle goes on) *even to ſpeak of*, and much more to act *thoſe things that are done of ſome in ſecret*; things that require thick Darkneſs in the Commiſſion, and lead to Blackneſs of Darkneſs in the Concluſion. *But all things that are reproved, are made manifeſt by the Light; for whatſoever doth make manifeſt, is Light*: ver. 13. Meaning, that all ſuch vile Abominations, how cloſely ſoever carry'd and conceal'd now, will ſhortly be diſcover'd and made manifeſt; for as Light is the proper Means of diſcovering what Darkneſs hides, ſo the Light of the Goſpel at preſent, and the Light of the Day of Judgment hereafter, will lay open and expoſe all the hidden Works of Darkneſs: which ſhould teach us to do nothing, but what will bear the Trial and Examination of both. And this will lead me to the

Concluſion or Application of this Epiſtle, in the laſt words; *Wherefore, he ſaith, Awake thou that ſleepeſt, and ariſe from the Dead, and Chriſt ſhall give thee Light.* The words, as to the Senſe of them, are quoted out of the Prophet *Iſaiah*, Chap. 60. ver. 1. *Ariſe and ſhine, for thy Light is come, and the Glory of the Lord is riſen upon thee*: Which is a Prophecy of the State of the Church under the Goſpel, when Light is come into the World, and the Day-Star from on high hath viſited us with Salvation; and therefore 'tis time to *awake out of Sleep, and to ariſe from the Dead.* Where Sin and Senſuality are compar'd, firſt, to *a Sleep*, partly for the Blindneſs they contract, and the Dreams and Deluſions wherewith they deceive us; and partly for the Drowſineſs and Inactivity they bring upon the Soul, and partly likewiſe for the Dangers and Surprize, to which they betray us. And to get free of them, is as fitly compar'd to *awaking out of Sleep*; becauſe it opens the Eyes, rouzes Men to Action, and puts them upon their guard

againſt all their Enemies, to which all Chriſtians are here call'd, as they are elſewhere; *Let us not ſleep, as do others, but let us watch and be ſober.*

Again, Impenitence and Hardneſs in Sin, is here compar'd to Death, becauſe it deſtroys the Strength and Vigour of the Soul, deprives it of all Motion in the Ways of God, and renders it paſt feeling. And a Recovery out of it is here call'd a riſing from the Dead: *You hath he quicken'd* (ſaith he elſewhere) *who were dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins.* And here he calls upon us, not only to awake out of the Sleep, but to ariſe out of the Death of Sin: And for our Encouragement adds, in the cloſe; *And Chriſt ſhall give thee Light.* And that in the double Senſe of Light, as it ſignifies Knowledg, and as it ſignifies Joy, or the Light of God's Countenance.

(1.) Chriſt ſhall give thee the Light of Knowledg, and inſtruct thee in all his Ways: *The Secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will teach them his Covenant*; Pſal. 25. *He that doth the Will of my Father* (ſaith Chriſt) *he ſhall know the Truth, whether it be of God*; John 7. God delights to communicate his Mind to them that are willing to do it: he that hath, that is, uſeth the Knowledg that he hath, ſhall have it more abundantly; but he that hath not, or uſeth it not aright, ſhall be depriv'd of what he hath.

(2.) Chriſt ſhall give thee the Light of his Countenance, and fill thee with Joy and Peace in believing: *Light is ſprung up for the Righteous, and joyful Gladneſs for the Upright in Heart.* They ſhall have inward Peace and Comfort here, and be filled hereafter with Joy unſpeakable and full of Glory.

Thus I have briefly conſider'd all the remarkable Parts of this Epiſtle; it remains then,

1. That we henceforth become Followers of God, as dear Children, and eſpecially in the Divine Grace of Love, of which he hath ſet us the moſt noble, and the moſt unparallel'd Pattern.

2. That we forſake all things that are offenſive and diſpleaſing to him; eſpecially all Uncleanneſs, and the other Works of Darkneſs, which are made manifeſt and reproved by the Light.

3. That we henceforth walk as Children of Light, doing and delighting only in things that can bear it; that the

Light of the Goſpel, which was given us for our Salvation, prove not at laſt to our greater Condemnation.

4. That we awake out of that Lethargy or Sleep, which Sin and Security hath lull'd too many into; that we be not deluded by Dreams, or impos'd upon by the falſe Shews and Appearances of this World, but open our Eyes in time, to ſee and ſeek for better things.

Laſtly, That we riſe from the Death of Sin to a Life of Righteouſneſs, and that will bring us e'er long to Life everlaſting: To which God of his infinite Mercy bring us all. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE XLVIII.

The GOSPEL for the Third Sunday in *Lent*.

St. Luke xi. 14——29.

Jeſus was caſting out a Devil, and it was dumb. And it came to paſs, when the Devil was gone out, the Dumb ſpake; and the People wondered. But ſome of them ſaid, he caſteth out Devils, through Beelzebub *the Prince of the Devils: And others tempting him, ſought of him a Sign,* &c.

IN this Goſpel for the Day, we may obſerve theſe three remarkable things.

Firſt, Our Saviour's diſpoſſeſſing a dumb Devil.

Secondly, The ill Conſtruction that ſome of the People made of it. And,

Thirdly, The good Uſe that we are to make of this, and all other Inſtances of his Divine Power. For the

Firſt, His diſpoſſeſſing of the Devil, and caſting out deaf and dumb Spirits; of this we often read in the Acts of our Saviour, as they are related by the four Evangeliſts. But of the Nature of Evil Spirits, the Perſons poſſeſs'd with

them, and the Manner of exorciſing or caſting them out, I had occaſion to ſpeak in the Goſpel for the laſt Sunday, concerning the Woman of *Canaan*'s Daughter being vexed with a Devil, and our Saviour's caſting it out; to which Diſcourſe I refer the Reader.

The dumb Devil here mention'd, is ſuppos'd by many to be a Spirit of Sadneſs and deep Melancholy, which is commonly attended with Silence, and ſuch a Preſſure upon the Animal Spirits, as make Men either unable or unwilling to ſpeak, call'd therefore a dumb Devil, or a dumb Spirit: ſuch was that which came upon *Saul*, when *the Spirit of the Lord departed from him*, and *an evil Spirit from the Lord troubled him*; as we read, 1 *Sam.* 16. 14, 15. Which evil Spirit is ſaid to conſiſt in the Perturbations of Sadneſs, Melancholy, and Deſpair; together with Rages, violent Furies, and other Motions and Exceſſes of the Hypochondriack Paſſions. Such likewiſe was that Spirit of Sadneſs and Melancholy that ſeiz'd upon *Ahab*, on *Naboth*'s denying him his Vineyard; of whom we read, that he was *heavy and diſpleas'd, and laid him down upon his Bed, and turn'd away his Face, and would eat no Bread*; inſomuch, that his Wife ask'd him the Cauſe of his Melancholy, and *why his Spirit was ſo ſad?* 1 Kings 21. 4, 5. Of ſuch Diſturbances of the Mind, by Fear, Sorrow, and Hypochondriack Vapours, we have many Examples in our own Time, which are thought to come under the Poſſeſſion of evil Spirits, and dumb Devils, of which we ſo often read in Scripture.

Now the rebuking of this evil Spirit, by removing this Sadneſs and Melancholy, and reſtoring the Perſon to Joy, Comfort, and Chearfulneſs of Mind, by what means ſoever, is the caſting out this dumb Devil, or diſpoſſeſſing this evil Spirit. *Saul*'s evil Spirit of this kind, was chas'd and charm'd away by *David*'s Muſick; which brought his Spirits into ſuch a Compoſure and Harmony, as made him leſs liable to the Impreſſions of Fear, or any Satanical Operation. So we read in 1 *Sam.* 16. 23. *It came to paſs, when the evil Spirit from God was upon* Saul, *that* David *took an Harp and played with his Hand; ſo* Saul *was refreſhed, and was well, and the evil Spirit departed from him.* And when that departed from him, *the Spirit of the Lord return'd upon him, and he propheſied*; 1 Sam. 19. 23. But our Saviour here, without the help of Muſick, or the uſe of any other Art, rebuk'd this dumb Devil, that he went out of the Man; *And when the Devil was gone out, the Dumb ſpake.*

He

He who was before tongue-tyed, and had all the Organs of Speech ſtopp'd, had his Tongue looſen'd, and began to ſpeak freely and fluently, to the wonder and aſtoniſhment of thoſe that heard him.

But *Secondly*, what Effect had this upon the People? Why, ſome of them made a very wicked and perverſe Interpretation of this Miracle, aſcribing it not to the Power of God, but ſaying in the next Verſe, *He caſteth out Devils through* Beelzebub *the Chief of the Devils*: meaning, that he made uſe of ſome of the ſuperiour Devils, to caſt out the inferiour Spirits, that were ſubject to them. This *Beelzebub* in the Original ſignifies the God of Flies, who as they thought had Legions or Swarms of evil Spirits under him, flying about in the upper and middle Regions of the Air; over whom, he, as Prince of the Devils, had Power to throw them out of thoſe that were poſſeſs'd with them. And to this they attributed Chriſt's diſpoſſeſſing of them, and thought that in caſting out Devils, he operated by this Power. Others therefore not thinking this a ſufficient Demonſtration of his Divine Power, to *tempt him* to a farther Trial of it, *ſought of him a Sign from Heaven*; deſiring of him ſome other Miracle or Token of his being ſent from God, as by a Voice from Heaven, or ſome other Sign or Prodigy in it.

But what Reply did our Saviour make to theſe two ſorts of Perſons? Why, *Jeſus knowing their Thoughts*, as well as hearing their Speeches, gave a full Anſwer to both. To the firſt, in the following part of the Goſpel for this Day; to the latter, in the remaining part of this Chapter, which being out of this Day's Goſpel, muſt be ſpoken to elſewhere.

To the firſt ſort, who thought our Saviour us'd the Devil's Power to caſt out Devils, he uſeth ſundry Arguments to convince them of the Abſurdity of ſuch an Imagination. As,

1*ſt*, *He ſaid unto them, Every Kingdom divided againſt it ſelf, is brought to Deſolation; and a Houſe divided againſt a Houſe falleth:* ver. 17. If any King or Prince mean to ſupport his Kingdom, he muſt not quarrel with his own Subjects, that are to uphold and defend him, nor caſt out them that are doing of him Service; ſuch Diviſions and Civil Diſſenſions as theſe, will ſoon deſtroy his Kingdom: and if in an Houſe or City the Inhabitants be divided one againſt

another, they neceſſarily fall firſt into Confuſion, and then into Deſolation.

If Satan alſo (ſaith he) *be divided againſt himſelf, how ſhall his Kingdom ſtand?* If there be a Diviſion among the evil Spirits, and one Devil ſet himſelf againſt another, their Kingdom cannot long endure. For to oppoſe, and violently to eject one another, muſt bring ſuch a Weakneſs, as will bring certain Ruin and Deſtruction upon the whole. Satan's Policy is greater than ſo; and therefore it muſt be abſurd to imagine, that I (ſaith our Saviour) ſhould caſt out Devils thro *Beelzebub*, which ſhould make ſuch a Breach or Diviſion among the Fiends of Darkneſs, as not only to endanger, but utterly to extinguiſh their whole Kingdom.

Again, *2dly*, He farther argues; *If I by* Beelzebub *caſt out Devils, by whom do your Sons caſt them out? therefore ſhall they be your Judges.* By Sons here we are to underſtand the Scholars or Countrymen of the *Jews*, the Diſciples of the *Phariſees*, who pretended to exorciſe or caſt out Devils in the name of the God of *Abraham*, the God of *Iſaac*, and the God of *Jacob*; the ordinary Form us'd by them in their Exorciſms. Now Chriſt thus reaſons with the *Phariſees*, who were the great Blaſphemers of his Miracles; If your Diſciples or Countrymen thus caſt out Devils by the God of *Abraham*, who hath the ſole Power over them, why ſhould you think or ſay, that I caſt them out by any other, and much leſs by the Prince of Devils, whoſe Intereſt it is not to aſſiſt, but oppoſe me in ſuch a thing, as tends to the Overthrow of his own Kingdom? *Therefore* (ſaith he) *they ſhall be your Judges.* They acknowledg that no Power but that of God, is able to overcome or eject evil Spirits, and that they do it only in his Name and by his Power; whereas you affirm it to be done by the Power of the Devil, which is to make the Devil caſt out himſelf, and to be acceſſary to his own Deſtruction: which is ſo abſurd, that your own Sons and Children will one day riſe up againſt you, and condemn your Blaſphemies.

From whence he infers in the next Verſe, *If I then with the Finger of God caſt out Devils, no doubt the Kingdom of God is come upon you*; ver. 20. Where our Saviour alludes to the Miracles of *Moſes*, which being own'd to be done by the Finger of God, prevail'd above all the Illuſions of the Magicians, and was a plain Evidence that he was ſent from God to be the Ruler and Saviour of *Iſrael*. In like man-

manner, if I (ſaith our Saviour) by the Power of God caſt out Devils, and act herein as *Moſes* did by the Finger of God, you may wellenough conclude my Miſſion to be divine, and that I am ſent from God as the Meſſias, to be the Saviour and Redeemer of Mankind.

This he farther proves, 3*dly*, from the Maſtery he had gain'd over the Devil, who would not quit his Hold, if he did not know and find Chriſt's Power to be ſuperiour to his; which he illuſtrates by the Reſemblance of a *ſtrong Man arm'd, who keepeth his Palace, and his Goods are in peace* and ſafety, againſt any that is inferiour in Strength to him. *But when a ſtronger than he ſhall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his Armour, wherein he truſted, and divideth his Spoils.* If any come with greater ſtrength againſt him, he ſeizeth his Armour and Goods, and becomes Maſter of all. The Senſe whereof is, that the Devil will not be caſt out of Poſſeſſion, except one arm'd with a Power ſuperiour to his come and conquer him. And therefore Chriſt's caſting out Devils, is an Argument that his Power is greater than theirs, or elſe (as St. *Matthew* ſpeaks to the ſame purpoſe) *how can any enter into a ſtrong Man's Houſe, or ſpoil his Goods, except he firſt bind the ſtrong Man, and then ſpoil his Houſe*, and plunder his Goods? *Mat.* 12. 29. So that Chriſt's diſpoſſeſſing of Satan, and making him quit his Hold, plainly ſhews that Chriſt hath maſter'd him, that his Power is above his, and that he hath ſubdu'd him and all inferiour Spirits under his feet. To which our Saviour adds that proverbial Saying, *He that is not with me, is againſt me, and he that gathereth not with me, ſcattereth:* that is, he that is not on my ſide in this Quarrel, taketh part with mine Enemy, and engageth himſelf againſt me; and he that gathereth not what Force he can for me, doth what in him lies to ſcatter mine. For as Chriſt is Satan's declar'd Enemy, by diſarming and diſpoſſeſſing of him, ſo they that join with him by not believing on Chriſt, are his Enemies too, and can have no ſhare or Benefit by his Victory over him. By all which our Saviour proves, that his caſting out of Devils was not by any Power of theirs, but his own, which was far ſuperiour to it. But

Thirdly, Here is imply'd a Caution touching the right Uſe of this diſpoſſeſſing Doctrine, that we ſet our ſelves againſt that Satanical Power which Chriſt ejected, leſt the caſting

out

out of one Devil serve but to make way for the return of that and many more, and so render the latter end of that Man worse than the beginning.

This is expres'd by way of Parable or Similitude, in the following Verses; *When the unclean Spirit is gone out of a Man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return to my House, whence I came out: and when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnish'd. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other Spirits, more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last State of that Man is worse than the first.* The Sense of which words is, that when an evil Spirit of Lust, Pride, Envy, Malice, or the like, is by the good Spirit of God thrown out of a Man, it grows restless and impatient, and seeks by all ways to return again to his former Habitation; the Devil like a roaring Lion going to and fro, seeking whom he may devour. So that without great Watchfulness and Care, the ejected Spirit will come back again to his former Hold, and bring with him a greater Force of evil Spirits, to possess and torment him, and so make the Condition of that Man worse than before he was ejected.

Whilst our Saviour was arguing and discoursing of these things, *Behold! a certain Woman in the Company*, in a kind of Rapture, *lifted up her Voice, and said, Blessed is the Womb that bare thee, and the Paps which thou hast sucked.* St. *Matthew* tells us, in relating of this matter, that his *Mother and Brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him*; but Christ, who would not be hinder'd from the Business he came about by any Relations, answer'd, *Whosoever doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my Brother, and Sister, and Mother*; Mat. 12.49, 50. And here, upon this Woman's breaking out in praise of his Mother, and pronouncing her Blessed that bore and suckled him, he said, *Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.* Whereby he sought to divert them from earthly and fleshly Considerations, and to direct them to more spiritual and heavenly Meditations; letting them know, that a true Follower of his was dearer to him than any Relation that was otherwise; and *Mary* was not so much blessed for conceiving him in her Womb, as she was by receiving his Word into her Heart.

This is the Substance of this Day's Gospel, which may help to instruct us in many useful and important Lessons.

As,

As, 1*st*, From Christ's dispossessing the Devil, we may be abundantly satisfy'd of the Divinity of his Power; for no Power less than that was able to dethrone that Prince of Darkness, and destroy that usurp'd Dominion he exercis'd over the Bodies and Souls of Men. St. *John* makes this the great End and Design of his Coming, 1 *John* 3. 8. *For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the Works of the Devil.* And this he effectually did, by vanquishing his Power, and subjecting him under his feet. By this he hath bound the strong Man armed with Rage and Cruelty, and put him in Chains of Darkness; spoiling Principalities and Powers, and the Rulers of the Darkness of this World, triumphing over them: so that greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the World. This we find the Devils themselves acknowledging, saying, *We know thee who thou art, Jesus thou Son of God, art thou come to torment us before the time?* They besought him not to send them into the Abyss, owning his Power, and submitting to it: which plainly proves his Divinity, and that he hath all Power in Heaven and Earth, and under the Earth. Hence we find the Apostles saying to him, *Lord, the very Devils are subject to us through thy Name.*

2*dly*, From Christ's arguing against the *Pharisees* and others, who ascrib'd his casting out of Devils to *Beelzebub* the chief of the Devils; we may learn to beware of all such perverse Interpretations of Christ's Miracles: for this is that unpardonable Sin or Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which our Saviour tells us shall not be forgiven in this World, nor that which is to come. This we may learn from our Saviour's Discourse in the 12th Chapter of St. *Matthew*, where after he had confuted the Blasphemy of the *Pharisees* in this point, he adds, *Ver.* 31, 32. *That all manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men, but the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven: And whosoever speaketh against the Son of Man, shall be forgiven; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, shall not be forgiven, neither in this World, nor in the World to come.* Not for want of Mercy and Goodness enough in God, but for want of Grace or a Capacity in the Subject, who maliciously resists the Way and Method of obtaining Pardon, which is only by Faith in Christ, wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, whose Works he opposes, and whose Miracles he despiseth: and he that doth so, renders himself utterly incapable of all Pardon; for such an obstinate holding out

against

againſt the Works of God, and imputing them to the Devil, bids a manifeſt defiance unto God, and the Way contriv'd for Man's Salvation; a wilful perſiſting wherein ſo hardens the Heart, and ſears the Conſcience, as to leave no room for Repentance, without which no Pardon can be had: which ſhould teach us to beware of this Sin, and to watch againſt all the ſteps and degrees that lead to it.

3*dly*, From Chriſt's power over the Devil, we may learn not to fear his Aſſaults, nor yield to his Temptations; but to reſiſt him ſtedfaſt in the Faith, for he is only a vanquiſh'd Foe, whoſe Power is broken, and is no more formidable than a dead Lion, or a painted Serpent. His Sting is taken out, ſo that tho he may hiſs, he cannot hurt us; he may tempt and ſollicite, but cannot conſtrain us, and without our own Conſent can never prevail againſt us. *Reſiſt the Devil* (ſaith St. *James*) *and he will flee from us*: 'tis but to keep our ground, and we are ſure to win the Field, for Chriſt hath ſubjected all our Enemies under our feet, and by the Power of his Grace hath made us more than Conquerors over them. Let us not then fear or deſpond under any of his Attempts upon us, but turn the deaf ear to all his Temptations. Chriſt hath arm'd us againſt him, and his Grace will be ſufficient to repel all his Force; and therefore we may in all his Onſets ſay with our Saviour, *Get thee behind me, Satan.*

4*thly*, From the unclean Spirit's going out, and coming again with greater violence, we may learn, if we have gain'd any point upon Satan, or any of his Temptations, not to neglect our Watch, but ſtill to be upon our guard againſt him; for he is ever looking for an opportunity of returning upon us, and tho he may find his former Seat ſwept from ſome Filth, and garniſh'd with ſome outward Shews, yet if we are not aware of him, he will come again and bring ſeven Spirits more wicked than himſelf, to enter in and dwell there; and ſo render matters worſe than they were before. The Devil is a ſubtle Adverſary, who is ever watching his Opportunities, and will be ſtill improving his Advantages to the utmoſt upon us; and therefore St. *Peter* wills us to *be ſober and vigilant, becauſe our Adverſary the Devil, as a roaring Lion, walketh about ſeeking whom he may devour*; 1 Pet. 5. 8. St. *Paul* bids us to put on the whole Armour of God, that we may be able to ſtand in the evil Day; and having done all, to ſtand, putting on the Shield of Faith, and the Breaſt-plate of Righteouſneſs, to guard

us

us against all the fiery Darts of Satan: but above all, to take the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; for with this Weapon Christ himself resisted all the Temptations of the Devil, urging Scripture against him, saying, *It is written* to the contrary, to all that he offer'd him. For which reason, the Author to the *Hebrews* stiles the Word of God *a two-edged Sword*, quick and powerful, that cuts every way, and will secure us against all Assaults. And this will lead us to the

Last Inference to be drawn from this Gospel; and that is, from our Saviour's pronouncing those blessed above all other Persons that hear the Word of God and keep it, to exhort us to the due Observation of both. Hearing is indeed the great Instrument of Knowledg and Instruction; *Faith comes by Hearing* (saith the Apostle) *and Hearing by the Word of God*: for *how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a Preacher?* Rom. 10. 14, 17. Moreover, Hearing is the ordinary way and means of Salvation; so saith God by the Prophet *Isaiah*, *Hear, and your Soul shall live*, Isa. 55. 3. But yet 'tis not all Hearing that is sufficient to this end; we must be Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only, otherwise we shall but deceive our own Souls. The Word of God is not to be hung up only as a Jewel in the Ear, but must come into the Heart, and appear in our Lives and Conversations, before it can bring us to eternal Life: 'tis they that hear the Word and keep it, that are alone blessed in their Deed. Our Saviour compares such as build their Hopes upon Hearing only, to the foolish Man that built his House upon the Sand; where when the Winds blew, and the Storms beat upon it, it fell, and great was the Fall thereof: whereas they that added Doing to their Hearing, are liken'd to the Wisemian that built his House upon a Rock, where when the Rains descended, the Floods came, and the Winds blew and beat upon the House, it fell not, but stood firm against any Tempest, because it was founded on a Rock.

In a word then, if we will build for Eternity, and lay a good Foundation for the time to come, we must receive the Word into our Hearts, lay it up in our Memories, and cause it to bring forth Fruit in the Course of our Conversation; and then we shall be sure in the end to reap everlasting Life; which God grant, *&c.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE XLIX.

The EPISTLE for the Fourth Sunday in *Lent*.

Gal. iv. 21, to the end.

Tell me, ye that desire to be under the Law, do ye not hear the Law? For it is written, that Abraham *had two Sons, the one by a Bond-Maid, the other by a Free-Woman; but he who was of the Bond-Woman was born after the Flesh, but he of the Free-Woman was by Promise*, &c.

THE Church, in the Collect for this Day, acknowledges that the best of us, by our evil Deeds, do worthily deserve to be punish'd; and therefore prays, that by the Comfort of God's Grace we may be mercifully reliev'd, thro Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Epistle for this Day sets forth the difference between the Law and the Gospel, and pursues the general Design of the whole Epistle to the *Galatians*; which was to vindicate the Liberty of the Gospel from the *Judaical* Yoke, against some who would impose it upon the converted *Gentiles*, and thereby hinder the progress of the Gospel among them. The Portion of Scripture selected for this Day's Epistle, supposes and refers to this Controversy, which was much debated in the days of the Apostles; but being long since antiquated, and now laid asleep in our days, I shall no farther revive it, than is necessary to shew, as we are this day led, what this Controversy was, how it was manag'd, and what use we are to make of it. For the

First, The Controversy then started, and warmly debated, was concerning the Obligation of *Moses*'s Law: not the Moral Part of it, consisting of the Decalogue or Ten Commandments, for that was own'd by all to have a perpetual and indispensable Obligation; but the Ritual or Ceremonial Part of it, consisting of Sacrifices, Washings, and

many

many other Types and Ceremonies, which being only Shadows of good things to come, vaniſh'd when the Subſtance came; and being all fulfill'd in Chriſt, ceas'd of courſe at his Appearance.

However, there were ſome falſe Teachers in thoſe days crept into the Churches of *Galatia*, and other Churches, that ſtrictly urg'd the Obſervance of the *Moſaical* Ceremonies; and ſo made it neceſſary to Juſtification, not only to have Faith in Chriſt, but to join with it the Works of the Law. Theſe falſe Teachers had prevail'd ſo far, as to ſhake and corrupt the Faith of many; which made the Apoſtle *marvel, how they were ſo ſoon remov'd from him, that call'd them into the Grace of Chriſt, to another Goſpel*, Chap. 1. 6. And likewiſe ſharply to rebuke them, ſaying, *O fooliſh* Galatians, *who hath bewitch'd you, that ye ſhould not obey the Truth*, but fall from the Grace of Chriſt to the Works of the Law? *Chap.* 3. 1, 2, *&c.*

Againſt theſe Corrupters of the Faith, that urg'd Circumciſion and other *Judaical* Rites, and blended them with Chriſtianity, St. *Paul*, who was the great Apoſtle of the Uncircumciſion, ſets himſelf with a more than ordinary Zeal and Indignation; telling the *Galatians*, that tho theſe Teachers might ſeem zealouſly to affect them, yet 'twas not well; for they would exclude you, ſaith he, from the Truth, merely that you might affect their Perſons, and embrace their Errors. And therefore he earneſtly cautions the *Galatians* againſt them in that Chapter; and here

In the Epiſtle for this Day, he comes more cloſely to reaſon the matter with them, from the Faith of *Abraham*, and the Promiſe made to him; ſaying in the beginning, *Tell me, ye that deſire to be under the Law:* where he intimates, that ſome were ſo fond of the Law, as even to deſire to be under it, and prefer'd the Yoke of legal Rites and Ceremonies before the Liberty of the Goſpel, which delivers from it. Of ſuch as theſe, he asks the Queſtion, *Do ye not hear the Law?* to which if you will hearken, you may plainly ſee your ſelves confuted in it: *For it is written, that* Abraham *had two Sons, the one by a Bond-Maid, the other by a Free-Woman:* that is, *Abraham* who was the Father of all the Faithful, is in Scripture ſaid to have two Children by two Women; the one by *Hagar*, who was his Bond-Maid or Concubine, and that denotes the Bondage of the Law; the other by *Sarah*, who was his Wife and a Free-Woman, and that denotes the Freedom of the Goſpel.

Now

Now of these two, *he who was of the Bond-Woman*, saith he, (that is, *Hagar*'s Child) *was born after the Flesh*; in a mere natural way, which represents a State of Nature, as opposite to a State of Grace in Christ: *But he who was of the Free-Woman* (that is, *Sarah's* Child) *was by Promise*; *i.e.* above or beside the ordinary Course of Nature, by the Power of God, and by virtue of a Promise made to *Abraham*, which represents the State of the Gospel, and the Grace and Favour of God promis'd in it to our Faith in Christ, who was of the Seed of *Abraham*, in whom all the Nations of the Earth were promis'd to be blessed. *Which things* (as the Apostle goes on) *are an Allegory*, that is, a Figure or Resemblance; so the word Allegory signifies, *viz.* a figurative way of expressing one thing by another: for it follows, *these are the two Covenants*, the Law and the Gospel, which are signified or set forth by these two Mothers, *Hagar* and *Sarah*, and the two kinds of Issue proceeding from them, *Ismael* and *Isaac*.

The one from Mount Sinai, *which gendereth to Bondage, which is* Agar. And the better to make out this Resemblance, he tells us, *that this* Agar *is Mount* Sinai *in* Arabia; the Place where the Law was given, and is out of the Bounds of the Land of Promise: in which respect it *answereth to* Jerusalem *that now is, and is in Bondage with her Children*; that is, 'tis parallel or agreeable with the present State of those *Jews* or *Hagarens*, that sprung from *Ismael*, who are bound by their Laws to Circumcision and other *Jewish* Observances, and so with *Agar* and her Issue, are still in a servile Condition.

But Jerusalem (saith he) *which is above, is free, which is the Mother of us all.* Meaning, that *Sarah* and her Issue, which denote the Gospel, or the New *Jerusalem* that is above, are all Free-men and Citizens of Heaven: and being descended from this Free-Woman, who is the Mother of us all, *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*; we are thereby freed from all the Mosaical Rites, and may obtain Justification and Life Eternal without them. By which we see the Liberty of the Gospel asserted and prefer'd before the Thraldom and Bondage of the Law; which if rightly understood, and well consider'd, will be found matter of great Joy and rejoicing to all Christians: *For it is written, Rejoice thou Barren, that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not; for the desolate hath many more Children than she that hath a Husband.* The words are written in the 54th

of

of *Iſaiah*, ver. 1, *&c. Sing, O barren, thou that didſt not bear; break forth into ſinging, and cry aloud thou that didſt not travail with Child; for more are the Children of the Deſolate, than the Children of the married Wife, ſaith the Lord*, &c. Which words are a Prophecy of the free and flouriſhing State of the Church under the Goſpel, which ſhould be enlarg'd by the Acceſſion of the *Gentiles*; and ſhe who was before barren and deſolate, ſhould have many Children and Proſelytes, and thereby increaſe and multiply into a numerous Offspring, who were to be advanc'd above the beggarly Elements and Rudiments of *Moſes*'s Law, and put into a higher Form by the more ſpiritual and manly Inſtitutions of the Goſpel.

Theſe Bleſſings are, in the next words, apply'd to all good Chriſtians; *Now we, Brethren, as* Iſaac *was, are the Children of the Promiſe.* For as *Iſaac* was the natural Seed of *Abraham*, not by ordinary Means, *Sarah* being then paſt Age; but by the ſtrength of God's Promiſe, of giving him a Son in his old Age: ſo are we the ſpiritual Seed of *Abraham*, not by natural Generation, but by virtue of that Promiſe, that in his Seed ſhould all the Nations of the Earth be bleſſed. By which we, even as *Iſaac* was, may be ſaid to be the Children of the Promiſe.

But leſt we ſhould be too much lifted up with the Thoughts of theſe Privileges, the Apoſtle adds a cooling Conſideration to keep us humble, in the following words; *But as then, he that was born after the Fleſh, perſecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even ſo it is now*: that is, we muſt expect Trouble and Perſecution from the evil Men of this World, before we ſhall inherit the Bleſſing. For as *Iſmael*, the carnal Seed of *Abraham* born after the Fleſh, mock'd and perſecuted *Iſaac*, his promis'd Seed born after the Spirit, as we read, *Gen.* 21. 9. even ſo they who adhere to legal and carnal Ordinances, and expect Juſtification thence, will revile and perſecute the ſpiritual Sons of *Abraham*, who (as he did) caſt themſelves upon Faith in Chriſt, and ſeek Salvation thence. Of this, Chriſt himſelf warn'd his Diſciples, ſaying, *In the World ye ſhall have Tribulation.* And the Apoſtle to the ſame purpoſe, *They that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus ſhall ſuffer Perſecution*; and *through many Tribulations we muſt enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*; which may teach us to look and to prepare for them. To encourage us hereunto, our Saviour hath annexed Bleſſedneſs to the Perſecuted, and exalted them far above their

Perſecutors. So the Apoſtle here from the Sacred Story tells us, that *Iſmael* the Perſecutor was to be caſt out, and *Iſaac* the Perſecuted was to inherit: *Nevertheleſs what ſaith the Scripture, Caſt out the Bond-woman and her Son; for the Son of the Bond-woman ſhall not be Heir with the Son of the Free-woman.* This Saying of Scripture is written *Gen.* 21. 10. where the Iſſue of *Hagar* were forbidden to inherit with the Iſſue of *Sarah*, but rather to be thrown out of *Abraham*'s Family; neither were the Children of the Fleſh to partake of the Bleſſing with the Children of the Promiſe: the former were to be caſt out and rejected, and the latter only to be receiv'd and rewarded with the Kingdom of Heaven. In like manner, they that look for Juſtification by the Works of the Law, will be caſt out of all Favour with God; and they that depend upon Faith in Chriſt, ſhall alone find Acceptance with him, and become Heirs of Glory.

From all which, the Apoſtle infers the Perſons to whom this Bleſſing belongs, and they are all good Chriſtians; ſaying in the Cloſe of the Epiſtle, *So then, Brethren, we are not Children of the Bond-woman, but of the free*; which is the ſame with what he elſewhere tells us, *that we are not under the Law, but under Grace*: for the Children of the Bond-woman being born under the Law, were oblig'd to Circumciſion, and ſubject to all the carnal Ordinances; they were under the Yoke of the Ceremonial Law, which was ſo heavy and burdenſom, that, as St. *Peter* tells us, *neither they nor their Forefathers were able to bear it*, Acts 15. 10. for by that they were bound up in all the Punctilio's and Actions of human Life, and few or no things were left indifferent to them: they were not at liberty for their Meat or Drink, nor for what they ſhould put on, nor yet for the Times and Manner of Waſhing; but were preſcrib'd to as to their Diet and Apparel; and many things, in their Nature indifferent, were prohibited and made unlawful to them: they had a Hand-writing of Ordinances againſt them, which ſeal'd up many things from them, with touch not, taſte not, handle not. Their numerous and coſtly Rites and Sacrifices were impos'd upon them by the ſame Tye of Neceſſity and Holineſs, as the weightier Matters of the Law, and the Puniſhment of their Neglect was equally ſevere; which made them juſtly ſtil'd a Yoke, and ſuch a one too, as was very heavy and hard to be borne. This was the State and Condition of the Children of the Bond-woman, who were in Bondage to theſe Rudiments: but *we* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *are not Children of the Bond-woman*; we are not deſcen-

ded

ded from *Hagar* the Handmaid, as the *Ismaelites* and *Hagarens* were, who are therefore subject to these things; but we are *Children of the Free-woman*, being descended from *Sarah* and her Son *Isaac*, as it is written, *In Isaac shall thy Seed be called*. By this Descent we are the Children of the Promise, and are no longer under the Law, but under Grace; for Christ hath taken that heavy Yoke of *Jewish* Ceremonies from off our Necks, and hath substituted in its room the easy Yoke of Faith and Repentance: He requires now no other Circumcision than that of the Heart; he calls for no other Calves, but those of the Lips, to be render'd to him; nor does he expect any other Sacrifices, but those of a humble and contrite Spirit; he hath blotted out the Hand-writing of Ordinances, that was against us, and nail'd it to his Cross; by which he hath freed his Church from any farther Obligation to, or Observance of it: in a word, he hath dissolv'd the whole Frame of the Ceremonial Law, and thereby verify'd what himself affirms, that *his Yoke is easy, and his Burden is light*; Mat. 11. 32.

This is the happy Condition of the Children of the free Woman, in which Number we are, being instated in all the Privileges of the Gospel, and translated from a State of Misery and Bondage into the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God; by which we become free Denizens of the Kingdom of Grace here, and of Glory hereafter.

This is in brief the Sum and Sense of the Epistle for this Day, the Use and Application whereof we have in the first Verse of the next Chapter. *Stand fast therefore in the Liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again in the Yoke of Bondage*; where we are exhorted to stand fast both in the right Use, and in the Defence of this comfortable Doctrine of Christian Liberty.

As, I say, We are to continue stedfast in the right Use of our Liberty, without perverting or abusing it to ill Purposes, by using it as a *Cloak of Maliciousness*, or making it a pretence for Disorder and Disobedience. Now the right Use of our Liberty consists,

(1.) In satisfying our Consciences in the free Use of indifferent things without any Scruple or Doubtfulness; looking upon every Creature of God as good, if us'd with Temperance and Thanksgiving; not doing any thing with an Opinion of Holiness, which God hath no where commanded, nor abstaining from any thing with an Opinion of Unholiness, which God hath no where forbidden; but to use them freely, as

things left in our own power, keeping ſtill to the Rules of Sobriety towards our ſelves, of Charity to our Neighbours, and Loyalty to our Superiors.

(2.) It conſiſts in avoiding all judging or cenſuring our Brethren in the free Uſe or Forbearance of ſuch indifferent Matters; for ſince God hath granted to us a Liberty in theſe things, why ſhould we paſs Sentence upon any for the Uſe of them? In ſuch Caſes we may ask the Queſtion, *Who made thee a Judg?* and *what haſt thou to do to judg another Man's Servant? to his own Maſter he ſtandeth or falleth.*

(3.) The right Uſe of our Chriſtian Liberty conſiſts in the more free, ingenuous and chearful ſerving of God that gave it: This is the Uſe we are frequently adviſ'd to make of it, that being made free from Sin, we ſhould be the Servants of God; and being reſcu'd from the Bondage we were in to our Enemies, we ſhould ſerve him without Fear in Holineſs and Righteouſneſs all the Days of our Life. This is the right Uſe of our Liberty, in which we are all to ſtand faſt, avoiding all Abuſe of it, either by an intemperate Uſe of God's Creatures, or by uſing our Liberty to the Scandal and Offence of weak Brethren, or by making it a Plea for Diſobedience to our lawful Superiors; as if our being freed from the Moſaical Rites and Ceremonies, had ſet us free from all the Rules of Order and Decency in God's Service, and let us looſe to all manner of Schiſms, Diviſions and Diſorders in the Church of Chriſt, which is to put one of the beſt of Things to one of the worſt of Uſes: againſt which St. *Peter* cautions all Chriſtians in 1 *Pet.* 2. 16. *As free, but not uſing your Liberty for a Cloak of Maliciouſneſs, but as the Servants of God.*

2*dly*, We are to ſtand faſt as in the right Uſe, ſo in the Defence and Maintenance of our Chriſtian Liberty, that we be not entangled again in the Yoke of Bondage. The great Invaders of Chriſtian Liberty, in the Apoſtles Days, were thoſe falſe Teachers, who crept into the Churches of *Galatia*, *Corinth* and *Philippi*, to ſpy out their Liberty, that they might bring them into Bondage: to which end, they preach'd up Circumciſion, and urg'd the antiquated Rites of *Moſes*'s Law upon the converted *Gentiles*; and by that means betray'd their Liberty, and brought many into Bondage, as we read, *Gal.* 2. 4. & *Chap.* 4. 9. Againſt theſe the Apoſtle ſtrenuouſly argu'd, and caution'd all Chriſtians in thoſe ſeveral Churches, and *gave no Place by Subjection to thoſe falſe Brethren, no not for an hour, that the Truth of the Goſpel might continue with them*, Gal. 2. 5. The great Infringers of Chriſtian Liberty, in our Days, are of two ſorts: (1.)

(1.) Of thoſe who make more Things neceſſary to be believ'd and done, than are warranted by the Word of God.

(2.) Of thoſe who make more things unlawful, and neceſſary to be left undone, than God hath made ſo.

Of the firſt ſort are the Church of *Rome*, who impoſe new and uncommanded Doctrines and Practices upon the Conſciences of Men, which God has no where requir'd of them; as Tranſubſtantiation, worſhipping of Images, praying to Saints, and the like; which, tho void of all Authority and Foundation from Scripture, are yet obtruded as Articles of Faith neceſſary to be believ'd and done in order to Salvation, and urg'd with Anathema's, Curſes, and upon pain of Damnation: which is *teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men*, and is a groſs Infringement and Violation of our Chriſtian Liberty.

Of the other ſort are the Sectaries and Diſſenters of our Days, who make more things ſinful, and neceſſary to be let alone, than God hath made ſo; which is a plain Addition to God's Word, and an Abridgment or Diminution of our Liberty; ſuch is their making a Form of Prayer unlawful, kneeling at the Sacrament ſinful, and uſing ſuch a Garment abominable: All which being in themſelves lawful and indifferent, to fix Unlawfulneſs or Sinfulneſs upon them, is to add to God's Word, and to take from our Liberty; and therefore as *touch not, taſte not, handle not*, were juſtly accounted Superſtition and Will-worſhip in the Apoſtles Days, ſo kneel not, pray not by a Form, uſe not ſuch a Garment, may be reckon'd no better in ours: and being enjoin'd, by the Authority of the Church and Government under which we live, to refuſe Conformity to them, muſt be great Stubbornneſs and Diſobedience.

To draw then to a Concluſion; ſince Chriſt hath, at a dear Rate, purchas'd a Liberty for his Church, and we are no longer Children of the Bond-woman, but of the free, let us endeavour to make a good Uſe of it, and likewiſe take care not to loſe or betray it. The Uſe, we ſee, we are to make of it, is, the more freely and chearfully to ſerve God, that gives us this Freedom, and not to take occaſion from thence to diſpleaſe and diſhonour him; neither are we eaſily to part with it, by ſubjecting our ſelves to new Doctrines, or uncommanded Precepts or Prohibitions; but being the Servants of God, we may not become the Servants of Men, ſo far as to make them Maſters of our Faith or Conſcience in either, but ſtand faſt in the Freedom purchas'd for us in both; and by thus aſſerting our Liberty now, we ſhall e'er long be tranſlated to the more glorious Liberty of the Sons of God: Which God grant, *&c.*

DISCOURSE I.

The GOSPEL for the Fourth Sunday in *Lent.*

St. John vi. 1——14.

Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, *which is the Sea of* Tiberias; *and a great Multitude followed him, because they saw his Miracles, which he did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a Mountain, and there he sate with his Disciples,* &c.

IN the Collect for this Day we beseech Almighty God, that we, who for our evil Deeds do worthily deserve to be punish'd, may, by the Comfort of his Grace, be mercifully reliev'd thro Jesus Christ our Lord.

Accordingly, the Epistle for the Day shews the Relief we receive by him in our Souls, by a Freedom from the Yoke of the Mosaical Law.

The Gospel for the Day shews the Relief that Mankind found by him in their Bodies, by healing their Distempers, and supplying their Necessities. It begins with an account of our Saviour's Motion from place to place, and the many Miracles he wrought wherever he came, by healing the Maladies of all that came, or were brought to him; which confirms what is said of him, *Acts* 10. 38. *He went about doing good to the Bodies and Souls of Men.*

After our Saviour had staid awhile at *Jerusalem*, and there done many miraculous Cures on infirm and diseased Persons, at which the *Jews* took great Offence, because some of them were done on the Sabbath-day, and therefore sought to kill him; of which, and his Reasoning with them, we have an account in the foregoing Chapter: he remov'd from thence, and *went over the Sea of* Galilee; St. *Luke* calls it, *The Lake of* Gennesareth, for so it was; call'd *the Sea of* Galilee, from the Confluence of many Waters into it; as also, *the Sea of* Tyberias,

Tyberias, because the City of *Tyberias* was situate upon it. Where, when our Saviour had landed, *a great Multitude followed him, because they saw his Miracles, which he did on them that were diseased.* Miracles draw strongly, especially such as are Salutary and Medicinal; for so our Saviour's generally were: and he that can do such, shall never want Followers and Admirers. But tho the Multitude attended him mostly for the Good of their Bodies, yet he always took the Opportunity of imparting something to them for the Good of their Souls; he better knew what they wanted, and what would do them most Good, than they did themselves: And therefore the next words tell us, that *Jesus went up into a Mountain, and there sate with his Disciples*; where the Multitude following him, he took occasion to discourse to them of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of Heaven: which he the rather did, because *the Passover, a Feast of the Jews, was nigh*, being the fourteenth Day of the first Month *Abib*, Lev. 23. 5. These words are added, not only to shew the Circumstance of Time, when these things were done; but likewise to set forth the Subject-matter of his Discourse to them, which was concerning the spiritual Sense and Use of that Holy Sacrifice, and to lead them from the *Paschal Lamb* to the *Lamb of God*, typify'd by it, *that takes away the Sins of the World.*

Having finish'd his Discourse with them, he went away (as St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke* relate it) *into a desart Place belonging to the City of* Bethsaida, *Luke* 9. 10. where the Multitude (either from an Admiration of his Person, or an Expectation of receiving Good from him) still follow'd him; for 'tis said, that *when he lifted up his Eyes, he saw a great Company coming unto him.* St. *Luke* tells us, that he receiv'd them, and spake unto them of the Kingdom of God, and heal'd them that had need of healing. But when the Day began to wear away, and the Evening was come, the Twelve came to our Saviour, and said unto him, "Send the Multitude away, that "they may go into the Country and Towns round about, to "lodg and buy themselves Victuals; for we are here in a "desart Place, where none is to be had:" But Jesus (saith St. *Matthew*) was mov'd with Compassion towards them, because they had come from far, and had nothing to eat; and therefore said unto the Disciples, "They need not to depart, "give them to eat;" to let them know, that he will not suffer them to want bodily Food, who seek to him for spiritual. The Disciples reply'd, "That they had not enough to furnish

" out one Meal for ſuch a Multitude, and therefore ask'd, " Whether they ſhould go and buy Meat for all this People, " which requir'd a great proportion?" St. *John* here brings in our Saviour, upon the hearing of theſe things, asking *Philip*, one of his Diſciples, *Whence ſhall we buy Bread, that theſe may eat? And this he ſaid to prove him, for he himſelf knew what he would do.* He herein only try'd the Faith of his Diſciples, to ſee what Opinion they had of his Divine Power and Ability to help them. *Philip*, in a kind of diſtruſtful manner, *anſwered him*, that *two hundred Penny-worth of Bread was not ſufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little*; as if that were a matter of difficulty to him, to whom all things are not only poſſible, but eaſy.

And this ſhews that good Men may be ſometimes too apt to diſtruſt Divine Providence, and almoſt to deſpond in great Extremities: ſo we find the Diſciples here did, doubting the lack of Proviſions in the Wilderneſs, tho Chriſt was with them; and elſewhere in a Storm they were afraid of ſinking, when Chriſt was in the Veſſel; which made him blame their Fear and want of Faith, ſaying to them, *Why are ye fearful, O ye of little Faith?* Now to cure their Infidelity, our Saviour asks what Proviſions they had, ſaying, *How many Loaves have ye?* They ſay unto him, Five, and two little Fiſhes: And here *one of his Diſciples*, Andrew Simon, Peter's *Brother, ſaith unto him, There is a Lad here that hath five Barley-Loaves, and two ſmall Fiſhes; but what are they among ſo many?* Still ſomewhat of Diffidence remains; however, *Jeſus ſaid unto them, Make the Men ſit down, by Fifties*, ſaith St. *Luke*; *by Hundreds and by Fifties*, ſaith St. *Mark*. *Now there was much Graſs in the Place*, which made it convenient either to ſit or lie down, as the manner of the Country was; *So the Men ſate down*, in Ranks or Companies upon the Graſs, *in number about five Thouſand, beſide Women and Children*, ſaith St. *Matthew*, which made the Number much greater. And Jeſus took the Loaves, and *looked up to Heaven, and bleſſed them*, ſaith St. *Mark*: where, by his *looking up*, he ſhews us, that all the good things we receive come from above, even from the Bounty and Goodneſs of our heavenly Father; by his *bleſſing* of the Loaves, he gives us to underſtand, that 'tis the Bleſſing of God that puts all the nouriſhing Power and Virtue into them: ſo he elſewhere tells us, that *Man liveth not by Bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God. And when he had given Thanks, he diſtributed to the Diſciples, and the Diſciples to them that were ſate down.*

Before

Before he brake or distributed the Bread, he gave God Thanks for it, and implor'd his Blessing upon it, to give us an Example to do likewise, *viz.* to lift up our Hearts to Heaven, and to own that all our Sustenance and Preservation cometh from thence: and then *every Creature of God will be good to us, when we thus receive it with Thanksgiving*, 1 Tim. 4. 4. When he had thus said Grace, or begg'd a Blessing, he distributed first to the Disciples, and then the Disciples distributed to the rest of the Company; which might perhaps give occasion for that Order of our Church in the Communion-Service, to distribute first to the Priests and Deacons then present, and they after to the other Communicants. The Matter here distributed by our Saviour to the Disciples, and by them to the other Guests, were the five Barley Loaves, and two small Fishes, which a Lad happen'd to bring thither; of these he first dealt out the Bread, *and likewise* after *of the Fishes, as much as they would:* A poor Entertainment (one would think) for so great a Multitude; for five Barley Loaves, among five thousand People, could amount to but one Loaf among a thousand Men; yea, considering the Women and Children, it could not possibly reach to that: and the two little Fishes, divided among so many, could scarce amount to any thing. A very slender Pittance for so great a Number, especially considering, that they were all weary, and almost fainted for Hunger. And yet all the Evangelists, in the next words, tell us, that *they did all eat and were filled:* A little, with God's Blessing, will feed more, and go farther than the greatest unsanctify'd Abundance; *Better is a Dinner of Herbs* (saith *Solomon*) *where Love is, than a stalled Ox, and Hatred therewith: Better is a little with the Fear of the Lord, than the greater Treasures and Troubles of the Wicked:* Prov. 15. 16, 17. And elsewhere, *Better is a little with Righteousness, than great Revenues without Right*; Prov. 16. 8. By all which the Wiseman lets us know, that the Blessing of God can make the Poor rich, and they that have but little and very hard Fare, become more fat and well-liking than the most luxurious Epicure. Here a very great Multitude were satisfy'd with little or nothing, as with Marrow and Fatness; and a poor Pittance gave more Satisfaction than the richest Banquet. When God Almighty sees it necessary, he can feed a Prophet by a Raven, and cause him to bring every day Provision enough to supply his Wants: he can make a Widow's Barrel of Meal, tho daily us'd for necessary Occasions, not to waste, and a Cruise of Oil, tho daily consum'd, not to fail; which may teach us at

all

all times to rely upon God's Providence in the uſe of good Means, without any Diffidence or Diſtruſt; knowing, as Chriſt himſelf hath told us, that if *we ſeek firſt the Kingdom of God, and the Righteouſneſs thereof, all theſe* earthly *things ſhall*, one way or other, *be added unto us*. But to go on:

When they were all filled, and abundantly ſatisfy'd with the Proviſion afforded to them, *Jeſus ſaid unto his Diſciples, Gather up the Fragments that remain, that nothing be loſt.* This he did to give us an Example of Frugality, and a provident Care in theſe Matters, that nothing that is left over and above our preſent Wants ſhould at any time be loſt or thrown away. Our Bleſſed Saviour would have no Want, nor no Waſte, and therefore commanded, that the broken Pieces of Bread, and the Remainder of the Fiſhes, ſhould be preſerv'd to help, as their future Neceſſity might require. They that careleſly waſte God's Creatures, and make ſpoil of the good things beſtow'd upon them, commonly live to find the Want of them, and pine away for lack of that which they have vainly conſum'd: The looſe and the prodigal Perſon often comes to Poverty; and *the Sluggard* (as *Solomon* tells us) *is frequently clothed with Rags*. And this may teach us to take better care, and make better uſe of the Bleſſings of God vouchſafed unto us.

But tho theſe things, as before related, are all wonderful, yet the main of the Miracle is ſtill to come.

Gather up the Fragments that remain (ſaith our Saviour to the Diſciples) *that nothing be loſt.* Why, was it poſſible that there ſhould be any Fragments remaining of five Loaves and two ſmall Fiſhes, after above five thouſand Perſons had been fed and fill'd with them? Was it not much more to be wonder'd at, that theſe ſhould hold out for the feeding of ſo great a Number, than that there ſhould be any danger of loſing what was left, after they were all ſatisfy'd?

And yet the next Verſe tells us, that ſo it was; *Therefore they gather'd them together, and filled twelve Baskets with the Fragments of the five Barley Loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.* This was indeed the Wonder of Wonders, that when all they had to eat would not half fill one Basket, there ſhould yet remain enough to fill twelve Baskets; and that after they had all eaten and were fill'd, there ſhould be above twelve times more left, than was at firſt ſet before them. Their Proviſions, it ſeems, increas'd by eating; and the more they ſpent, the more ſtill was left remaining.

This

This was enough to beget Admiration in all that saw or heard of it, and to strike them with Astonishment at that Divine Power, that was alone able to effect it: and so we find it did; for the last words of the Gospel tell us, *Then those Men, when they had seen the Miracles that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet, that should come into the World:* by which we see, that the Evidence of Miracles carries with it the strongest Conviction. Some of these Persons had before heard of his Doctrine and excellent Instructions with little Regard or Success, but his Miracles leave deep and more lasting Impressions; especially this, which they saw and receiv'd the Benefit of, made them all conclude, that this was he that should come as a Prophet to instruct Mankind, as a Priest to save them, and as a King to rule over them. Accordingly the People, upon the sight of this Miracle, came to him, and would make him their King; hoping they might find Deliverance from one that was able to maintain Thousands by Miracle, and to raise and feed an Army without Taxes or Contribution. But when *Jesus perceived that the People would come and take him by force to make him a King, he departed again into a Mountain alone*; i. e. he retir'd to his Privacy and Prayer, to avoid an Advancement. When he saw them again, he check'd their Worldly-mindedness, saying unto them, *Verily, verily I say unto you, ye seek me not because ye saw the Miracle, but because ye did eat of the Loaves and were filled*; ver. 26. Because he found their Appetite too eagerly set upon earthly and bodily Food, he seeks to take it off, and to raise it to more spiritual and heavenly Provisions; saying in the next Verse, *Labour not for the Meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to eternal Life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed:* adding, that he was that Bread of Life that came down from Heaven, and can alone satisfy the Wants and Cravings of the Soul; for *he that cometh to me* (saith he) *shall never hunger, and he that believes in me shall never thirst.*

This is briefly the Sum of that Discourse which this great Prophet deliver'd upon the Miracle of the Loaves; which will be more largely consider'd on the last Sunday after *Trinity*, when this same Gospel is again appointed for that Day. In the mean time let us see what Use and Improvement we are to make of it at present. And,

1st, From Christ's going about from place to place, doing good to the Bodies and Souls of Men, we may learn, according

ing to our ſeveral Abilities and Capacities, to do the ſame. This is St. *Paul*'s Advice, *As we have Opportunity to do Good to all Men*; Gal. 6. 10. We cannot indeed do Miracles as Chriſt did; we cannot raiſe the Dead, or heal all manner of Diſeaſes; we are not able to give Eyes to the Blind, or Feet to the Lame, or do any ſuch wonderful Works, which are not requir'd or expected of us: but there are other things that lie within the Reach and Verge of our Power; we can feed the Hungry, clothe the Naked, relieve the Oppreſſed, inſtruct the Ignorant, comfort the Feeble-minded, and the like: theſe things are in our power, and we are commanded to the utmoſt of our Abilities to do them. The Precept and Example of our Saviour ſhould moſt powerfully excite us to the Practice of them; for he made doing Good his ordinary and daily Employment; 'twas the end likewiſe of his extraordinary and miraculous Works, and was indeed the Sum and Subſtance of all his Religion: ſo that if we would approve our ſelves to be his Followers, we muſt go and learn to the utmoſt of our power to do likewiſe: hereby we ſhall become moſt like unto God, and beſt imitate his Divine Goodneſs, which is the higheſt and nobleſt Perfection we can poſſibly arrive to. Herein alſo we ſhall find no ſmall Pleaſure and Satisfaction; a Pleaſure that will be permanent and laſting; a Pleaſure that will ſtand by us in the moſt needful Times, even *the Hour of Death, and the Day of Judgment*: in a word, it will bring Peace and Comfort to our Souls here, and crown us with an everlaſting Reward hereafter.

2*dly*, From Chriſt's encouraging all that follow'd him, and helping them out in all the Straits they met with in their Attendance upon him, we may learn to call and invite all Men to come unto him; he is ever ready to receive them in the Arms of his Mercy, and to relieve them in all their Wants, both corporeal and ſpiritual: *Come unto me* (ſaith he) *all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you Reſt*; Mat. 11. 30. There is no Reſt to be found any where elſe, but under his Care and Providence; and therefore we read, that when the Diſciples, under ſome Trouble, were thinking of leaving of him, he ſaid unto them, *Will ye alſo go away?* they preſently reply'd, *Lord whither ſhall we go? thou only haſt the Words of eternal Life.* There is no place of Safety but under the Shadow of his Wings; and we can find no Reſt to our Souls, or Health to our Bodies, but what he is pleas'd to adminiſter to both; which is ſufficient to lead or draw us to him.

3*dly*, From

3*dly*, From Christ's looking up and blessing the Provisions before he gave them to the Disciples or the Multitude, we may learn not to omit the craving of a Blessing, and giving of Thanks in the Use of God's Creatures. This, we see, was our Saviour's Practice, as 'tis here related by the Four Evangelists; and this likewise was the Practice of the Apostles, as we find related of St. *Paul*, that before he and his Company took Bread, *he gave Thanks to God in the Presence of them all*, and then after *brake it and began to eat*; Acts 27. 35. which pious Practice is deriv'd down thro all succeeding Ages, even to us. *Every Creature* (saith the Apostle) *is sanctified by the Word of God and Prayer*, 1 Tim. 4. 5. where, *by the Word of God*, we are not to understand the written Word, but the Word of his Power and Providence, whereby he ordereth and commandeth the Creatures to afford such Service and Comfort in their several kinds as he thinks fit; which, sanctifying the Creatures, enables them to do their Office, and us to receive the Benefit and Comfort of them. As Bread is the Staff of Life, so the Blessing of God is the Staff of that Staff; without it Bread could no more nourish us than a Stone, nor Fish than a Serpent; and with it a small matter will suffice to all the Ends of Nature: which should teach us to invoke it by daily and diligent Prayer.

4*thly*, From God's blessing those small Provisions, to the satisfying of so many Thousands, and at last multiplying the Fragments into more than was first set before them, we may learn to put our Trust in God at all times, and to depend upon his Care and Providence in our greatest Necessities. We cannot doubt either his Ability or Readiness to help us, from the Instance of this Day: and what reason can we have to distrust him, after so many Experiments? We may not indeed always expect Dainties or Varieties, for that may be more pernicious than profitable for us; but if we use our Endeavours, and trust in God, we shall not want a Competence. *The Lions may lack and suffer Hunger* (saith the Psalmist) *but they that fear the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good*: And we may safely rely in all Conditions upon the Word of him, who is both Truth and Goodness it self.

Lastly, From our Saviour's taking occasion from this earthly Food to mind his Disciples of more heavenly Provisions, we may learn to elevate our Minds above all things here below to the things above. So his Apostles likewise frequently instruct us, to set our Affections not on the things on the Earth, but on the things in Heaven; and for very good reason

ſon too, becauſe the things of the Earth are all temporal and periſhing, but the things in Heaven are ſpiritual, and laſting to all Eternity; which, if we follow, we ſhall ſecure a ſufficient Portion here, and everlaſting Treaſure hereafter: Which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE LI.

The EPISTLE for the Fifth Sunday in *Lent.*

Hebrews ix. 11——16.

Chriſt being come an High Prieſt of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect Tabernacle, not made with Hands; that is to ſay, not of this Building: Neither by the Blood of Goats and Calves, but by his own Blood he enter'd in once into the Holy Place, having obtain'd eternal Redemption for us, &c.

THE Collect for this Day beſeeches Almighty God mercifully to look upon his People, that by his great Goodneſs they may be govern'd and preſerv'd evermore both in Body and Soul, thro Jeſus Chriſt our Lord; that is, by his Merits and Mediation: For the better underſtanding whereof,

The Epiſtle for the Day ſhews us the Greatneſs of Chriſt's Prieſthood, above that under the Law; and the tranſcendent Excellence and Efficacy of his Sacrifice, above all the legal Sacrifices; as will appear by the following Diſcourſe. The beginning of the Epiſtle acquaints us,

1ſt, That *Chriſt became an High Prieſt*: The Office of a Prieſt under the Law was to offer Sacrifice, and pray for the People; the Office of the High Prieſt was to enter once a Year into the Holy of Holies, with the Blood of the Atonement, and there to bleſs and make Interceſſion for them: which Offices Chriſt perform'd to the full in the behalf of his People; for he gave himſelf as a living, holy and acceptable

table Sacrifice, blessing, praying and interceding for them: call'd therefore a Priest for ever after the Order of *Melchisedech*, who was King and Priest together; with a Priesthood never to cease, or to be succeeded into by any. Again,

2*dly*, Christ is said to become an High Priest of *good things to come*; that is, either of good things to come after the Law, of which the Sacrifices and Ceremonies were but a Shadow; or else of good things to come after this Life, to wit, a Reward of eternal Glory and Happiness; of which the Law gave none, or but obscure notice.

3*dly*, He is an High Priest of good things to come, *by a greater and more perfect Tabernacle, not made with Hands; that is to say, not of this Building*: by which is meant the Tabernacle of his Body; for St. *John* tells us, *The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us*; in the Original it is ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, he took up his Tabernacle among us, *John* 1. 14. meaning, that he took a Body like ours, and dwelt among us, according to that of the Psalmist, *A Body hast thou prepared for me*. This he calls a *greater and more perfect Tabernacle*, being far more honourable than that under the Law; the Tabernacle of his Body being *not made with Hands*, as that under the Law was, but form'd in an extraordinary manner by the Holy Ghost in a Virgin's Womb; and so was not a Building like the Old Tabernacle of Wood and Stone, nor yet like other human Bodies by common and natural Generation; but of a more Divine and Spiritual Frame, by an unusual and miraculous Operation of God's Holy Spirit, which gave a more than ordinary Excellency to it above any other Tabernacle or Building; call'd therefore the true Tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not Man, *Heb.* 8. 2.

Neither did Christ's Sacrifice, by which he procur'd these good things to come, consist of the Blood of Goats and Calves, as the Legal Sacrifices did, but of his own most precious and immaculate Blood; by which *he entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtain'd eternal Redemption for us*. After he had enter'd upon his Priesthood, he, instead of that Holy of Holies into which the High Priest under the Law was wont to enter, ascended into Heaven, which was prefigur'd by it, and is the Holy Place in which he is here said to enter; And this he did *once* for all, instead of the High Priest's entring once a year into the Holy Place, that represented it; for Christ, by one Sacrifice of himself, perfected all them that believe, and so there was no need of reiterating

ing that perfect Sacrifice, as they did the Legal Sacrifices for their Imperfection.

Again, he is said to enter into this Holy Place once for all, *with his own Blood.* The High Priest enter'd once a year with the Blood of Goats and Calves, which were offer'd on the Days of Expiation; as we read, *Lev.* 16. 5. But Christ went into Heaven with the Sacrifice of himself, which was sufficient to make Atonement for the Sins of the World: And by that he *hath obtain'd eternal Redemption for us*; having rescu'd us from the Power of Sin and Satan, and freed us from the Bondage we were in to our ghostly Enemy.

This the Author of this Epistle proves in the next Verse, by the Energy and good Effect of far inferior Sacrifices; and from thence argues the much greater Efficacy of this High and Holy Sacrifice, and the far nobler Benefits and Privileges which we receive thereby: *For if* (saith he) *the Blood of Bulls and of Goats, and the Ashes of a Heifer sprinkling the Unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the Flesh*, &c. where 'tis suppos'd, that the Blood of Bulls and of Goats had a cleansing Power to the purifying the Unclean, not indeed of themselves; for the Apostle elsewhere tells us, that *'tis impossible for the Blood of Bulls and Goats to take away Sin*: but by the Power of God's Word commanding them to that end, and by virtue of Christ's Blood, which they were appointed to typify and represent. The Blood of a Bullock and a Goat were requir'd under the Law for a Sin-offering, and the Ashes of a burnt Heifer were to be sprinkled on an unclean Person, for the Purification of the Flesh; as we read *Numb.* 19. & *Lev.* 16.

And if these inferior things, that had no Value or Virtue in them of their own, were ordain'd and commanded for these Purposes; *How much more* (saith the Apostle) *shall the Blood of Christ, who thro the eternal Spirit offer'd himself without Spot unto God, purge your Conscience from dead Works to serve the living God?* that is, how much more shall the invaluable Blood of our Saviour, who made a free Oblation of himself as a Lamb without Spot, purge us from the Guilt of Sin, and purify us for God's Service? From whence he infers, in the next words, that *for this Cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament*; which being the principal thing intended in this Epistle, must be more fully spoken to.

To which end we must know, that a Mediator, in the general Notion of it, is one that comes between two Parties, to make up some Breach or Difference between them. Thus we know,

know, if any Controverſy ariſe between two or more Perſons, he that interpoſes for the reconciling and adjuſting Matters between them, is call'd a Mediator. And this may be undertaken either voluntarily, without any Application made to him; as when any one, out of mere Good-will and Deſire of Peace, endeavours to ſerve and reconcile two differing Parties, without their referring Matters to him; in which caſe he can only perſuade, but cannot enforce his Counſel upon them: or elſe it may be done with the Conſent and Authority of both Parties; as when they both agree to refer their Matters to any Perſon, to be decided and determin'd by him; in which caſe he may not only perſuade, but command their Obedience: for having authoriz'd him to act in their ſtead, by referring themſelves to him, whatſoever he doth in the Matters committed to him, is in effect the Act of both Parties; who having both ſubmitted their Wills to his, and mutually impower'd him to act for them, they are as effectually concluded and determin'd by what he doth, as they are by their own Act and Deed.

But beſide a Mediator by Conſent, there is likewiſe a Mediator by Office; as when one is deputed by a Magiſtrate, who hath the Power over both, to hear and determine any Matter in Diſpute or Controverſy between them: ſuch a one, tho no Referee or Mediator by Conſent, is yet ſo by Commiſſion or Office, having receiv'd Power from one, who hath the Command of both; and ſuch a one may not only entreat, but enforce both to obey his Deciſion. This is briefly the Nature and Office of a Mediator.

But how came Chriſt to be our Mediator? for we read, *There is one God, and one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Chriſt Jeſus*, 1 Tim. 2. 5. Why, this came to paſs, partly by Chriſt's voluntary undertaking this Office; and partly by God the Father's Deſignation, and appointing him to it. For the

1ſt, Chriſt Jeſus was pleas'd, without any Application or Aſſent of ours, freely to undertake this Office for us; for tho all Mankind had offended God by the firſt Tranſgreſſion, and thereby incur'd all the direful Effects of his Diſpleaſure, yet were they utterly unable to recover or help themſelves out of this Miſery. Now in this forlorn Eſtate, the Son of God, out of mere Pity and Good-will to us, voluntarily interpos'd, and became our Advocate and Mediator; which is in Scripture ſaid to be without any Deſire or Deſert of ours, and is every where aſcrib'd to the free Grace and Goodneſs

of our Redeemer: ſo that as the Offerings under the Law were to be free and of their own accord; ſo this of our Saviour's under the Goſpel was infinitely free and voluntary. And yet he is ſaid,

2*dly*, To be deſign'd and appointed by God the Father to this Office of Mediator; both which may agree well enough together: for in the eternal Purpoſe and Decree of Heaven for the Recovery of loſt Man, the Son of God freely offer'd himſelf as a Surety or Mediator for them, and God the Father as willingly accepted of, and authoriz'd him to it. Of this Covenant on God the Father's part, we read *Iſa.* 53. 10. *If he ſhall make his Soul an Offering for Sin, he ſhall ſee his Seed, and prolong his Days.* Of the Son's Acceptance and Undertaking hereof, we read *Pſal.* 40. 7, 8. *Then ſaid I, Lo! I come; in the Volume of thy Book it is written of me, I come to do thy Will, O God.* Upon which Agreement he in time enter'd upon, and perform'd for us the Work of a Mediator, being therefore ſtil'd the Meſſiah, the Chriſt, and the Anointed of God to this purpoſe: all which are included in the Name here given him, of the Mediator of the New Teſtament; ſo call'd, to diſtinguiſh him from *Moſes*, the Mediator of the Old Teſtament: of whom we read, *Gal.* 3. 19. where 'tis ſaid, that *the Law was ordain'd by Angels in the Hand of a Mediator*; that is, it was deliver'd to the *Iſraelites* by the Hand of *Moſes*, who was appointed to mediate between God and his People: for a Mediator is not a Mediator of one, but more. And as *Moſes* was the Mediator under the Old Teſtament, to ſtand between God and his People in the *Jewiſh* Covenant; ſo is Chriſt the Mediator under the New, to act for and between both in the Chriſtian Covenant: for which reaſon he is ſtil'd, *The Mediator of the New Covenant*; Heb. 12. 24. And becauſe this New Covenant is eſtabliſh'd upon better Promiſes, having Privileges of a higher Nature, of a larger Extent, and more laſting Duration, he is ſaid to *be the Mediator of a better Covenant*; Heb. 8. 6.

But how did Chriſt execute this Office of a Mediator? Why that, the next words tell us, was *by the means of Death, for the Redemption of the Tranſgreſſions that were under the firſt Teſtament*; *Death was the Wages of Sin*; *and without ſhedding of Blood there is no Remiſſion.* Accordingly by tranſgreſſing the firſt Covenant, we all lay under the Sentence of Death; and he that would procure our Pardon, and make our Peace, muſt undergo the Puniſhment in our ſtead that was due

due to our Sins. Now this Chriſt, as our Mediator, under-took and did for us; for he laid down his Life to ſatisfy Divine Juſtice in our behalf, and thereby made an Atonement for the Sins of Mankind, becauſe the Blood of Bulls and of Goats had not Value or Virtue enough for this Expiation. Chriſt ſpar'd not his own Blood, but willingly ſhed it for our Redemption. By this means he hath tranſacted and concluded our Peace for us, and reſtor'd us again to that Love and Favour of God, which, by the Tranſgreſſions that were under the Firſt Teſtament, we had utterly loſt and forfeited. *He hath redeemed us from the Curſe of the Law* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *being made a Curſe for us; and hath given himſelf a Ranſom for all*, 1 Tim. 2. 6. By which 'tis evident, that our Mediator, by one Oblation and Sacrifice of himſelf, hath made a full, perfect and all-ſufficient Atonement and Satisfaction for the Sins of the World; and ſo hath obtain'd a New Covenant for us, ratify'd and ſeal'd with his own Blood, whereby we are redeem'd from the Guilt of thoſe Tranſgreſſions, which could not be expiated under the Old Covenant. And this gives him the Title of the Mediator of the New Teſtament; which he farther executes by being our Advocate, and interceding for us: for as he ſatisfy'd for our Sins, by the Merit of his Sacrifice, ſo is he ſtill pleading of it with his Father for our Pardon. So St. *John* tells us, *If any Man ſin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the Righteous; and he is the Propitiation for our Sins, and not for ours only, but for the Sins of the whole World:* 1 John 2. 1, 2. He is enter'd into the Holy Place, not made with Hands, but into Heaven it ſelf, *there to appear in the Preſence of God for us*; Heb. 9. 24. So that now he is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all thoſe that come unto God by him, ſeeing he ever liveth to make Interceſſion for them; *Heb.* 7. 25. If at any time, thro the Weakneſs of our Nature, or the Strength and Importunity of Temptation, we are drawn aſide into the Commiſſion of any Sin, we have one at God's right Hand ever ready to plead our Cauſe, and ſue out a Pardon for us. But have all Sinners the Benefit of Chriſt's Atonement and Interceſſion? No, his Atonement is indeed ſufficient for all, and is offer'd to all; for *he gave himſelf a Ranſom for all:* his Blood hath Merit and Virtue enough to become a Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World: but yet 'tis effectual only to a few, not for want of Worth in the Sacrifice, or of Efficacy in the Interceſſion; but for want of due Qualifications in the Perſons, to whom both are tender'd: for the New Covenant, purchas'd

by Christ's Blood, is not absolute, but conditional; the Benefit of it is suspended upon the Terms of Faith and Repentance: They who observe these Conditions, by believing in Christ, and turning from their Sins, are within the Verge of the Covenant, and partake of all the Privileges and Advantages of it; but they who persist in Impenitence and Infidelity, are Strangers to this Covenant of Promise, and are excluded from all the Grace and Favour of it.

But what is the End of Christ's Mediatorship? Why, that the last words of the Epistle for the Day will inform us; *viz.* that *they which are called may receive the Promise of eternal Inheritance*: that is, that the effectually call'd, or penitent Christians, may have Heaven and Happiness made over to them by way of Inheritance, having the first Fruits of it here, and the full and actual Possession of it hereafter, as Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with Jesus Christ our Mediator and Advocate.

This is the Sum of this Day's Epistle; in which we have the great Worth and Dignity of Christ's Sacrifice, together with the Nature, Manner and Benefit of his Mediation. From whence we are instructed in several good and useful Lessons: As,

1*st*, We learn hence the Imperfection of all the Legal Rites and Sacrifices, compar'd with the Excellency and Efficacy of Christ's Sacrifice: *The Law* (saith the Apostle) *was only a Schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ*; it consisted only of weak and beggarly Elements, that kept Mankind in a lower Form, wherein, like Children in their Minority, they could hardly spell out the Sense and Meaning of them, being an imperfect Rule, suited to an imperfect State: their Offerings, Sacrifices and Expiations had no Virtue in them to do away Sin, but only as they shadow'd out, and related to the great propitiatory Sacrifice under the Gospel, of which they had little or no knowledg. But Christ hath now unriddled all those Types and Shadows, and set Christians in a higher Form by more spiritual and manly Institutions; his offering up himself put all the Value and Virtue into them, and by that he hath sanctify'd and sav'd all that believe in him.

2*dly*, We learn hence the sad Condition that all Mankind were in under the Old Covenant, and the happy State whereinto they are translated by the New. The Law pronounc'd a Curse on all that kept not up to the Rigour of it; for 'tis written, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things*

that

that are written in the Book of the Law, to do them. And ſince no mere Man ever came up to the Perfection of the Law, but that in many things we offend all, it follows that they were all under the heavy Sentence and Malediction of that Covenant; in which forlorn and undone Condition they were altogether unable to help or relieve themſelves: but now Chriſt, by interpoſing as a Mediator, hath deliver'd us from this Sentence, and, by his Atonement and Interceſſion, hath obtain'd a new and better Covenant for us; wherein Allowance is made for Infirmities, and ſincere Deſires and Endeavours of pleaſing God are accepted for perfect Obedience: by which he hath infinitely better'd our Condition, and given us the greateſt reaſon to praiſe and adore him.

3*dly*, We learn hence the infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God, in finding out this Way and Method for our Salvation, which we could never have found out for our ſelves; for hereby his Juſtice is ſatisfy'd, and we are reliev'd by the Merits and Mercy of his Son: by this he hath made our Peace, and *we that were afar off, are now brought nigh by the Blood of his Croſs.* The Enmity that was between God and us is now remov'd, and a firm League of Amity and Friendſhip is made and ſettled between us; by which means *Mercy and Truth are met together, and Righteouſneſs and Peace have kiſſed each other.*

4*thly*, From Chriſt's being the Mediator of the New Teſtament, let us learn to addreſs to him as ſuch, and caſt our ſelves upon his Mediation; for he hath made an all-ſufficient Atonement, and obtain'd eternal Redemption for us: ſo that *whatever we ask the Father in his Name, he will give it us*; for he hath merited for us the Grant of our Petitions: the Incenſe of his Merits and Interceſſion perfume our Prayers, and render them an Offering of a ſweet-ſmelling Savour. Hence we find the Pſalmiſt praying, that *his Prayers might aſcend as Incenſe, and the lifting his Hands as a Morning Sacrifice*; Pſal. 141. 2. Accordingly our Church teaches us to conclude all our Prayers with the Merits and Mediation of Chriſt, which alone can give them all their Acceptance; and for that reaſon (ſaith the Apoſtle) *Chriſt is enter'd into the Holy Place not made with Hands, that is, into Heaven it ſelf, there to appear in the Preſence of God for us:* Heb. 9. 24.

5*thly*, We learn hence not to ſet up any other Mediators than God hath appointed, nor unwarrantably join any Copartners with him; for there is but one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Chriſt Jeſus: and therefore let us

not join the Virgin *Mary*, or any other Saint or Angel with him. The High Prieſt enter'd alone into the Holy of Holies, with the Blood of the Sacrifice, to atone for them that were without the Veil, thereby typifying our Saviour's going into Heaven, to be our ſole Mediator: and we juſtly forfeit all the Benefit of his Mediation, if we have recourſe to any other; for his Merits alone are ſufficient, and need none to be join'd with him. This Way we may have free Acceſs, and come with Boldneſs to the Throne of Grace; but we affront God, and diſparage our Mediator, if we go to him any other Way. And therefore,

Laſtly, To obtain the Benefit of Chriſt's Mediation, let us learn to fulfil the Conditions of the New Covenant, of which he is Mediator; that is, let us repent and believe the Goſpel, without which all that he hath done or ſaid for us will be of no avail: for God cannot be at peace with us, till we lay down our Arms, and ſubmit to him. If we regard Iniquity in our Hearts, he will not hear our Prayers; neither will any Interceſſion prevail, while we retain our Sin. Let us then do our part, by repenting and turning from our evil Ways; and then God will not be wanting on his part to give Grace here, and Glory hereafter.

DIS-

DISCOURSE LII.

The GOSPEL for the Fifth Sunday in *Lent.*

St. John viii. 46, to the end.

Jeſus ſaid, Which of you convinceth me of Sin? And if I ſay the Truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God, heareth God's Words; ye therefore hear them not, becauſe ye are not of God. Then anſwer'd the Jews, *and ſaid unto him, Say we not well, that thou art a* Samaritan, *and haſt a Devil,* &c.

THE Subject of this Goſpel is Chriſt's Reaſoning with the *Jews* about the Truth of his Miſſion and Meſſiahſhip; wherein he ſhews by ſundry Arguments, that he was the Perſon promiſed and ſent by God for the Redemption of Mankind, and likewiſe anſwers all their Cavils and Objections to the contrary.

It begins with a Queſtion, that upbraids their Calumnies, and wills them to ſay their worſt againſt him: *Jeſus ſaid, Which of you convinces me of Sin?* The occaſion of which Queſtion was from the rude and obſtinate Infidelity of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, as appears by the foregoing part of the Chapter; where we read how they ſought all manner of occaſion againſt him, and put the moſt perverſe Conſtructions upon all that he ſaid or did. And this made him ask the Queſtion, *Which of you convinceth me of Sin?* which is as if he had ſaid, "I know ſome of you charge me as an Impoſtor "and Blaſphemer, becauſe I ſay I came from God; others, "that my Record is not true, and ſo would make me a Lyar: "but which of you can prove or maintain your Charge? yea, "who is there among you that can convict me of the leaſt "Fault or Falſhood? or that I have either forg'd my Commiſſion, or abuſe my Office?"

And if I ſay the Truth, why do ye not believe me? "If I "do not in any manner impoſe upon you, but faithfully tell

" you the Truth, as I am commanded and commiſſion'd by " my Father; why do you wilfully reſiſt the Truth, and op- " poſe both me and my Father? But the truth is, as I be- " fore told you, *ver.* 44. ye are of your Father the Devil, " who was a Lyar and Slanderer from the Beginning, and " the Father of them; his Sons ye plainly are, and his " Works ye do."

For *he that is of God, heareth God's Words:* " If you were " the genuine Sons and Servants of God, you would receive " his Teſtimony, and believe the Scriptures, which teſtify of " me, and bear witneſs that God hath ſent me; but *ye there-* " *fore hear them not, becauſe ye are not of God.* 'Tis a mani- " feſt ſign that you belong not to him, by turning the deaf " Ear to what he hath ſpoken, and rejecting the Meſſage that " he hath ſent you, which God's Children and Servants are " never wont to do." And ſo, tho they could not convince him of Sin, *who did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth*, yet he abundantly convinc'd them of Folly in gain-ſaying the Truth, and refuſing their own Salvation.

But what Reply did the *Jews* make to this Diſcourſe of our Saviour? Why, when they had nothing elſe to ſay, they return'd him only abuſive and reproachful Language; for *they anſwered and ſaid unto him, Say we not well, that thou art a* Samaritan, *and haſt a Devil?* The Name of a *Samaritan* was in theſe days a Term of great Reproach, for it ſignify'd with them an Apoſtate or Revolter from the *Jewiſh* Religion, which render'd him odious and hateful to the *Jews*; inſomuch that (as St. *John* tells us) the *Jews* had no Dealings or Correſpondence with the *Samaritans*, John 4. 9. So that the calling our Saviour a *Samaritan*, was the fixing upon him one of the moſt odious Titles or Characters they could give him: to which they added the only one that was worſe, *Thou art a* Samaritan, *and haſt a Devil*; meaning, that he was a Mad-man, or beſide himſelf, one acted by a Spirit of Rage and Phrenzy; for ſo 'tis explain'd *John* 10. 20. *He hath a Devil, and is mad:* where the latter Word is added to explain the former.

But what Return did our Saviour make to this reviling Language? Why, *When he was reviled* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *he reviled not again, but referred himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly.* The Return he made was mild and gentle; for *Jeſus anſwered, I have not a Devil, but I honour my Father, and ye diſhonour me:* that is, " I do no evil or extravagant " thing, by which you might think me acted by an evil Spi-

" rit;

" rit; yea, so far from it, that I do the most noble and ho-
" nourable Work in the World: for *I honour my Father*, by
" doing the Work that he hath given me to do, and in all
" my Words and Actions endeavour to illustrate and advance
" his Glory; which is not the Work of a Madman, or one
" possess'd with a Devil: and therefore *you dishonour me*, and
" likewise him that sent me, by such unjust Censures and false
" Imputations." To persuade them whereof, he adds, that he had no selfish Ends, or ambitious Designs in any thing that he did: " For *I seek not* (saith he) *my own Glory*; if I
" did, I could easily display it before you in such Works, as
" should even dazzle your Eyes, and make you stand amaz'd
" at the Splendor and Glory of them; but I have no such
" worldly and ambitious Aims: 'tis entirely the Glory of
" my Father that I drive at, and to do the Work of him
" that sent me. But tho I seek not mine own Glory, (saith
" he) yet *there is one that seeketh and judgeth*; that is, my
" Father narrowly observes whether I am honour'd or dishо-
" nour'd by you, and will judg and deal with you accord-
" ingly; for of the Prophet that was foretold and promised
" should come, 'tis said, that *whosoever will not hearken to the*
" *Words that he shall speak in my Name, I will require it of*
" *him*, Deut. 18. 19. If you understood things aright, you
" would take me for that Prophet, and hearken to my Say-
" ings, to avoid the Danger of reproaching and rejecting
" of me."

This Reply of our Saviour carry'd so much Strength of Reason and Goodness in it, that many were convinc'd and converted by it; for some said, *These are not the Words of one that hath a Devil*, John 10. 21. Besides, his Works plainly shew him to come from God; for *can the Devil* (say they) *open the Eyes of the Blind?* And to say he doth this by the Power of the Devil, is very absurd; for 'tis to make the Devil act against himself, to the dividing and destroying of his own Kingdom.

After this, the better to encourage them to receive his Message, he adds, *Verily, verily I say unto you, If a Man keep my Saying, he shall never see Death.* But here the malicious *Jews*, instead of being convinc'd and encourag'd to their Duty, began again to cavil and carp at his Words, and to seek out farther occasion against him: for they presently reply'd upon him, *Now we know that thou hast a Devil*; Abraham *is dead, and the Prophets*; *and thou sayest, If a Man keep my Saying, he shall not taste of Death: Art thou greater than our Father* Abraham,

braham, *who is dead? and the Prophets are dead, whom makeſt thou thy ſelf?* This was a very popular and plauſible Objection, for the People had *Abraham* and the Prophets in very high Eſteem and Veneration, and were ever ready to pull down any that ſhould lift himſelf above them: they look'd upon *Abraham* as the Father and Founder of their Faith, and the Prophets as ſo many Meſſengers ſent from God, to deliver his Mind to them; and as none were ever favour'd by God like them, ſo they thought it a high Preſumption for any to exalt himſelf above them. Now when *Abraham* and the Prophets were not freed from dying, but all felt and fell by that fatal Stroke, they could not with any patience hear one aſſuming a Power to himſelf of beſtowing Privileges on others, to which none of the Patriarchs, Prophets, or any of the greateſt Favourites of Heaven ever attain'd. From hence they concluded for certain, that he was acted by a diabolical Power; for they ſaid, "Now we know that thou haſt a De-
"vil, or art one poſſeſs'd with an evil Spirit of Pride, in tak-
"ing to thy ſelf greater Honours than were ever confer'd on
"*Abraham* and the Prophets."

But what Reply did our Saviour make to all this? Why, *Jeſus anſwered, If I honour my ſelf, my Honour is nothing; it is my Father that honoureth me, of whom ye ſay, That he is your God:* that is, "If I go about to procure Honour to my ſelf,
"it would be only a piece of Ambition and Vain-glory, and
"all ſuch Honour is nothing worth. All the Honour I have,
"or deſire to have, is from my Father, who foretold of me
"by *Abraham* and the Prophets, proclaim'd me by a Voice
"from Heaven, and confirm'd my Miſſion by the Seal of
"Miracles; he it is that honoureth me, whom you ac-
"knowledg to be greater than *Abraham*, even the God of
"*Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*, whom you own as your God in
"Covenant with you. And yet, notwithſtanding all your
"Pretences and Proteſtations, *ye have not yet truly known him*;
"you know him not as my Father, nor worſhip him as your
"God; but are in a great meaſure ignorant of both: *But I*
"*know him* (ſaith Chriſt) for I came and receiv'd my Meſſage
"and Commiſſion from him; my Errand is to reveal him
"to you, and therefore I muſt know him more perfectly:
"and *ſhould I ſay* otherwiſe, that *I know him not*, or be drawn
"by your Reproaches to deny and conceal my Knowledg of
"him, *I ſhould be a Lyar like unto you*, i. e. I ſhould betray
"my Truſt, and prove as falſe and perfidious as you; which
"I may not, and cannot do, for *I know him, and keep his*

"*Saying*,

" *Saying.* I muſt tell you again, that I have ſuch a full and " perfect Knowledg of his Will, that I will not ceaſe from " keeping to it my ſelf, and from perſuading you to ob- " ſerve it.

" But becauſe you talk ſo much of your Father *Abraham*, " and boaſt of the many Privileges you derive from him, as " being of his Seed, I muſt here tell you, that *your Father* " Abraham *rejoiced to ſee my Day, and he ſaw it, and was* " *glad.*" And this being one of the principal Arguments for convincing the *Jews* and other Infidels of Chriſt's being the true promiſed Meſſias and Saviour of the World, it will be requiſite to inſiſt a little larger upon it.

There was a Promiſe made to *Abraham*, that *in his Seed all the Families of the Earth ſhould be bleſſed*, Gen. 12. 3. which Promiſe was repeated again, *Chap.* 18. 18. Now *Abraham* being ſtedfaſt in Faith, and not ſtaggering thro Unbelief, firmly believ'd and adher'd to this Promiſe; which Faith is by the Apoſtle deſcrib'd to be *the Subſtance of things hoped for, and the Evidence of things not ſeen*; Heb. 11. 1. Upon the Strength of this Faith, *Abraham* ſaw my Day (ſaith our Saviour) looking and longing for it, and with great Exiliency and Exultation of Mind rejoic'd at it. Where we may obſerve,

1*ſt*, That Chriſt had a Day, which he properly call'd his own; *My Day*, ſaith he. And when was that? Why, it was his Birth-day, or the time of his coming into the World; call'd ſometimes the Day of Grace, ſometimes the Day of Salvation, becauſe the Sun of Righteouſneſs then roſe upon the benighted World with healing in his Wings; which was the dawning of the Goſpel, and the beginning of that happy State: 'twas the Day when the Son of God *was made Fleſh, and dwelt among us*; *and Men beheld his Glory, as the Glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth*; John 1. 14. This was his Day, *viz.* the Day of his Nativity or Incarnation. This Day we read,

2*dly*, That *Abraham ſaw*, tho he liv'd ſome Thouſands of Years before it came to paſs: But how then did he ſee it? Why, not with his bodily Eyes, which were clos'd and ſhut up in the Grave long before; but he ſaw it by the Eye of Faith, for he believ'd in God, and it was accounted to him for Righteouſneſs: he ſaw this Day in the Promiſe, tho he died long before the Performance; he ſaw it in the firſt Promiſe made in Paradiſe, of *the Seed of the Woman's bruiſing the Serpent's Head*; he ſaw it in the Promiſe made to him,

of

of *all Nations being bleſſed in his Seed*; he ſaw it in the *Glaſs* of Prophecy, tho ſomewhat *darkly*. And yet 'tis ſaid,

3*dly*, That he rejoic'd at the ſight of it: *Abraham ſaw my Day, and rejoiced*; the word in the Original is ἠγαλλιάσατο, which ſignifies dancing and leaping for Joy. And yet that is not all: for 'tis added and repeated again, *He ſaw it and was glad; Gaviſus eſt gaudio magno*; He beheld it afar off, and yet was glad at it with exceeding great Joy. The Day of Chriſt then is a Day of Joy: So it was with *Abraham*, who from a remote view of it rejoiced greatly; and ſo would you (ſaith our Saviour, *ver.* 33, 39, 53.) if you were the genuine Sons of *Abraham*. A Reverend Father upon theſe words, brings in Chriſt reaſoning with and upbraiding the *Jews* for their Unbelief after this manner:

Pater Noſter Abraham, &c. "Our Father *Abraham* (ſaith "he) is ſtill in your Mouths, and your frequent Boaſt is, "we are *Abraham's* Seed; but if you were indeed his Chil- "dren, you would *patrizare*, do as he did, and tread in "the ſteps of his Faith; you would deſire what he deſir'd, "and joy in what he rejoiced at. Now my Day (ſaith "Chriſt) was ſo highly eſteem'd by *Abraham*, that he "was glad at the leaſt Glimpſe of it, and leap'd for Joy at "a very imperfect ſight of it: and you that would ſo fain "father your ſelves upon him, are ſo far from that, that "what he deſir'd abſent, you deſpiſe preſent; what he "would have been the better to ſee, you are the worſe "for ſeeing it. And how then are theſe *Abraham's* Chil- "dren, that have nothing of *Abraham* in them? *Ye ſeek to* "*kill me*, (ſaith he, *ver.* 40.) that did not *Abraham*; if "you were truly the Seed of *Abraham*, you would do the "Works of *Abraham*; whereas you do what he did not, "and do not what he did: he rejoic'd at my Day, and "was glad to hear the leaſt Tidings of me; but you con- "temn my Perſon and deſpiſe my Day, and how can ſuch "as you be the Sons of *Abraham?*" Doubtleſs the Father of the Faithful will diſown ſuch faithleſs Sons; *Abraham will be ignorant of you, and* Iſrael *will know you not*; Iſa. 63. 16. But what ſaid the *Jews* to this? Why, ſtill in the cavilling Vein; for when Chriſt told them of *Abraham's* Joy at the ſight of him, they ſaid unto him, *Thou art not yet fifty Years old; and haſt thou ſeen* Abraham? meaning, that his Age was able to confute his ſaying, and convince him of Falſhood; for ſince *Abraham* liv'd and died above two thouſand Years before he was born, how was it poſſible

either

either that he should see *Abraham*, or *Abraham* should see him? To this he reply'd, *Verily, verily I say unto you, before* Abraham *was, I am*; that is, you are much out in computing of my Age. For,

1. "I have a Being from all Eternity, by which I am "co-equal and co-eternal with my Father, and so had a real "Being and Existence before *Abraham* had any." Hence he speaks of the *Glory he had with his Father, before the World began*; "and consequently I being long before *Abra-ham* was born, might well enough see and know him." Moreover,

2. "As to my Being or Appearance here on Earth in a "human Body, that indeed was not much above thirty "Years ago; but yet this coming of mine in the Flesh, was "decreed by my Father long before *Abraham*'s time, and "was in kindness reveal'd to *Abraham*, from whom the "promis'd Seed should come. And this being made known "to him while he liv'd, he might in that respect know "me also: not that he saw me with his bodily Eyes in "that human Shape, in which I now appear, but that he "saw me by the Light of Faith; being told of God of "my coming in the Fulness of Time, to be born of a Wo-"man, for the Redemption of Mankind."

The *Jews*, upon the hearing of this, were extremely incens'd against him, taking him for a Blasphemer, and so began *to take up Stones to cast at him*; which was the Punishment appointed in the Law for Blasphemy. *But Jesus hid himself, and went out of the Temple.* He first conceal'd, and then convey'd himself away, to avoid their Cruelty; leaving the Temple, where 'tis probable this Conference was held.

This is the Substance of this Day's Gospel, which will afford us many pious and heavenly Meditations. As,

1. From Christ's challenging his Enemies, to convince him of Sin, we may learn to assert and clear our Innocence from the Calumnies of wicked Men, and to wipe off the Dirt they cast upon it; so our Saviour did upon all great and weighty Occasions. Indeed, slight and trifling Reproaches are better despis'd than debated; they die away by Contempt, but are kept alive by Resentment. But in all great and scandalous Imputations, that may wound our Persons or Professions, we are, by Christ's Example, to assert and vindicate our Integrity.

2. From

2. From the Teſt that Chriſt here gives, *He that is of God, heareth God's Words*; we may learn, not only to hear and ſubmit to God's Word our ſelves, but to ſuſpect all Perſons and Doctrines that cannot, or will not bear that Touchſtone: *To the Law and to the Teſtimony* (ſaith the Prophet *Iſaiah*) *and if they ſpeak not according to theſe, 'tis becauſe they have no truth in them.* And *ye therefore hear them not*, (ſaith our Saviour) *becauſe ye are not of God.*

3. From the *Phariſees* charging our Saviour here with having a Devil, we learn, that obſtinate Unbelievers will rather have recourſe to the groſſeſt Lyes and Impoſtures, than acknowledg and receive the Truth. Tho Chriſt's Doctrine and Miracles were directly oppoſite to the Intereſt and Deſigns of the Devil, and apparently tended to the Overthrow of his Kingdom; yet theſe inveterate Enemies of Chriſtianity would rather aſcribe both to a Diabolical Spirit, than to the Holy Spirit of God, from whom alone they came.

4. From Chriſt's declaring that he honour'd his Father, and ſought not his own Glory, but the Glory of God; we may learn to prefer the Honour of God before any worldly Intereſt or Vain-glory whatever: The Glory of God is the great End of our Lives, and the main Ingredient of our Happineſs, and therefore is to be purſu'd before and above all ſecular Honours and Advantages, which quickly fade and come to an end.

5. From *Abraham*'s ſeeing of Chriſt's Day, and rejoicing at it at ſo great a diſtance; we may learn to double our Joy, and to rejoice much more at a nearer View of him. He ſaw him only through a Glaſs darkly, but we Face to Face: he beheld him only in the Promiſe, but we in the Performance; his Face was veil'd with Types and Shadows under the Law, which gave a very imperfect and obſcure Repreſentation of him; but this Veil is now taken off under the Goſpel, and we behold him with open Face: For he became Fleſh and dwelt among us, and the Glory of his Divinity ſhin'd through the Mantle of his Humanity. Now if *Abraham* was ſo tranſported with Joy at ſo remote and obſcure view of a Saviour to come, with how much greater Exultation are we to receive him, now actually come to us? Sure a promis'd Meſſiah cannot be a matter of more, or indeed of half ſo much Joy, as God manifeſt in the Fleſh. And we who have liv'd to that happy Period, when all the Prophecies of him were fulfill'd, and all the Benefits promis'd

miſs'd by him conſer'd by his actual Appearance, ſhould never ceaſe adoring of and rejoicing in him.

The Angels proclaim'd his Birth-Day to be *Glad-tidings of great Joy to all People*; and accordingly began Hymns of Praiſe at his Nativity, ſinging, *Glory to God in the Higheſt, on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men.*

Let us then, by the Example of *Abraham* and the holy Angels, rejoice at the coming of a Saviour, and celebrate the Remembrance of him with Joy unſpeakable and full of Glory.

Laſtly, From Chriſt's affirming himſelf to be before *Abraham*, let us learn to acknowledg and adore his Divinity, who had a Being with the Father before all time, and gave a Being to all things in it. To him therefore with the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcrib'd all Honour and Glory, Might, Majeſty and Dominion, both now and for evermore. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE LIII.

The EPISTLE for the Sunday before *Eaſter.*

Phil. ii. 5——12.

Let this Mind be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus: Who being in the Form of God, thought it not Robbery to be equal with God; but made himſelf of no Reputation, and took upon him the Form of a Servant, and was made in the Likeneſs of Men, &c.

THIS Week immediately preceding the Feaſt of *Eaſter*, is more eſpecially deſign'd to fit us for that great Solemnity, and to that end, is to be ſpent in more than ordinary Piety and Devotion; it was antiently call'd ſometimes the Great Week, ſometimes the Holy Week, becauſe it hath a larger Service than any other Week, every Day having a ſecond Service appointed for it, in which are rehears'd at large the Sufferings of Chriſt, as they

they are deſcrib'd by the four Evangeliſts; that by reading and hearing the Hiſtory of his Paſſion, we may be better prepar'd for the Myſtery of his Reſurrection; that by his riſing from the Dead, we may be quicken'd to Newneſs of Life.

This Day, which begins this Holy Week, is call'd by the Name of *Palm*-Sunday, being the Day on which our Saviour enter'd *Jeruſalem* with great Joy; ſome ſpreading their Garments, others cutting down Branches of Palm, carrying them in their Hands and ſtrewing them in the Way, which hath been remember'd with great Solemnity.

The Collect for the Day puts us in mind of the tender Love of God towards Mankind, in ſending his Son not only to take upon him our Fleſh, but to ſuffer in it the Death of the Croſs for our Sins; to the intent, that all Mankind ſhould follow the Example of his great Humility: and thence teaches us to pray, that we may both follow the Example of his Patience, and alſo be made Partakers of his Reſurrection.

The Epiſtle for the Day preſents us to this purpoſe with the higheſt and beſt Pattern for our Imitation, even the Son of God, who hath done and ſuffer'd all theſe great things for us. It begins with this Advice, *Let the ſame Mind be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus:* What this Mind of his was, we ſhall ſee after. In general, it was, that we ſhould all ſo ſtand affected in Kindneſs, Humility, and Condeſcenſion to one another, as Chriſt Jeſus did towards us. 'Twas a wiſe piece of Advice from a learned Heathen, that every one ſhould propound to himſelf the beſt Patterns, not only of Vertue in general, but of each Vertue in particular; inſtancing in the Piety of *Socrates*, the Gravity of *Cato*, the Juſtice of *Ariſtides*, the Fidelity of *Regulus*, and the like: And to ſet them before him as a Copy to write after, and to tranſcribe their Vertues, as a Direction in the whole Courſe of his Life. This Advice the Apoſtle improves here to the beſt advantage, by ſetting before us the nobleſt Example of all Vertue that ever was or can be propounded to us; to wit, that of the Son of God, in whom all Grace and Goodneſs ſhin'd in their utmoſt Glory and Perfection.

The particular Grace or Vertue here recommended by Chriſt's Example, is that of Humility, a Grace much out of Requeſt before Chriſt gave it in Precept, and grac'd it by his own Example. If we peruſe the Writings of the wiſeſt

Mora-

Moraliſts, we ſhall ſcarce find the Name of Humility mention'd in the Liſt of their Vertues; they took it for a Puſillanimity and Lowneſs of Mind, and ſo 'twas deſpis'd and trampled on by the Pride and Gallantry of the World: and ſo it had been ſtill but a caſt Vertue, had not our Saviour preſs'd it upon his Diſciples, and likewiſe ſhew'd himſelf the greateſt Pattern of it; ſaying to them, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in Heart.* And the Apoſtle here ſpeaks to the ſame purpoſe; *Let this Mind be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus.* But the better to take the Dimenſions of Chriſt's Humility, St. *Paul* here gives us,

Firſt, The exceeding great Height and Eminence of the Perſon that humbled himſelf; it was one, that *was in the Form of God, and thought it no Robbery to be equal with God*, being himſelf God bleſſed for ever.

Secondly, The exceeding great Depth and Lowneſs of his Condeſcenſion: *He made himſelf of no Reputation*, but *humbled himſelf to the Form of a Servant*, to *the Likeneſs of Men*, yea, *even to Death*, and that the worſt of Deaths, even *the Death of the Croſs*. Again,

Thirdly, We have here the exceeding Largeneſs of the Reward, or the Height of his Exaltation that follow'd it: *Wherefore God alſo hath highly exalted him*, &c. In all which we may cry out with the Apoſtle, *O the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the Love of God, that paſſeth Knowledg!* Theſe things being the principal Matters contain'd in this Epiſtle, muſt be particularly ſpoken to. And,

Firſt, The better to underſtand the Greatneſs of his Humility, the Apoſtle lets us know the Greatneſs and Dignity of his Perſon, in theſe words; *Who being in the Form of God, thought it no Robbery to be equal with God.* Where by being in *the Form of God*, is not meant his aſſuming any accidental Form, Shape, or Likeneſs, by which he might only ſeem to be as God, or to reſemble the Deity; but the Form of God here ſignifies the Divine Nature and Eſſence; and his being in that Form, ſignifies his Divinity, that he was truly and really God, yea *God bleſſed for ever*, as it is expreſs'd, *Rom.* 9. 3. And that this is the Senſe of it, appears by the next words; *He thought it no Robbery to be equal with God*: Which implies the Reality of the Divine Nature, without which it had been the higheſt piece of Robbery and Preſumption, to pretend to an Equality with God. *To*

whom will ye liken me, or make me equal? saith God, *Isa.* 46. 5. There can be nothing equal with God, but a Being that is infinite, eternal, and independent, as his is; for a Being that is finite, created, and depending, can bear no proportion or comparison with him: and therefore Christ's thinking it to be no Robbery, no Usurpation or Encroachment upon the Divine Nature, by making himself equal with God, shews him to subsist in that one infinite, eternal, and independent Nature; and consequently, that he is God co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost, said to be *the Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person*; Heb. 1. 3. and therefore, to have the Fulness of the Godhead bodily dwelling in him. This is the Person that is here said to humble himself, *Majestatem præmisit, ut Humilitatem illustraret*, saith a Father; he sets forth the Greatness of his Majesty, to give the greater Lustre to his Humility: For a Beggar, or one in a mean Estate, to be humble, is a matter of no great Praise; for such a one hath nothing to puff him up, or if he had, every one would be ready to pull him down; all Pride in such is intolerable, and every one is apt to blow out such a Bubble, and to prick the Bladder of such a one's Pride and Vanity. But for a King to be humble, and to say with *David*, *I will be yet more humble*; yea, for the King of Kings to shew this great Humility, that is honourable and praise-worthy beyond all Expression.

Secondly, Now Christ, to this Height and Greatness of his Divinity, added the Depth and Lowness of his Humility; which is the next thing to be consider'd, in all the Steps and Degrees of it, as they are here related. And,

1st, Tho he was in the Form of God, and thought it no Robbery to be equal with him, yet *he made himself of no Reputation*: the word in the Original is ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσε, he emptied himself; he who had the Fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily, was yet pleas'd to empty himself, and to appear as void of it as any other. He lessen'd and diminish'd himself, seeming to be much meaner in the Eye of the World than he really was; which is the same with what is here render'd, a Man *of no Reputation*. So the Prophet *Isaiah* foretold of him, that he should be *despis'd and rejected of Men*; having, as to outward Appearance, *no Form or Comeliness in him*, nor *any Beauty that we should desire him*; Isa. 53. 2, 3. Which things were after

fulfill'd

fulfill'd in the many Reproaches, Indignities, and Contradiction of Sinners againſt himſelf, which he endur'd. All which he bore with an equal and undiſturb'd Mind: and that becauſe (as the words import) he made it his own Choice; for 'tis ſaid, he made *himſelf* of no Reputation: none elſe could have made him ſo without his Conſent; 'twas his own Act, and implies that he was rather deſirous to be low and mean, and of no Reputation, than to appear in any of the Splendor and Glory of the World, of which vain Men are too much ambitious. This is the firſt Step of his great Humility; *He empty'd himſelf, and became of no Reputation.*

The next is, *He took upon him the Form of a Servant, being made in the Likeneſs of Men:* that is, having ſtoop'd ſo low, as to take upon him our Nature, and to be made in the Likeneſs of Men, he ſtoop'd farther to the loweſt Rank of them, and put himſelf into the mean Condition of a Servant: He who was in the Form of God, and ſo Lord of all, took upon him the Form of a Servant, the vileſt and moſt abject ſort of Men; and the great King of Kings became a Subject to his own Subjects. This Office and Duty of a Servant he perform'd, not only by being obedient to his Father, and ſubject to his Laws who ſent him, as he tells us, *John* 6. 38. but likewiſe by being obedient to earthly Powers, and ſubject to the Laws of Princes, under whom he lived: yea, he went lower yet, and became a Servant to all Mankind, by doing the hardeſt work and ſervice for them; *I am among you* (ſaith Chriſt) *as one that ſerveth.* He waſh'd his Diſciples Feet, and condeſcended to the meaneſt Offices, whereby he might do any good. In a word, he did all that for us that was requir'd of us to do, and ſuffer'd all that we ſhould have undergone, and declin'd not the moſt difficult or meaneſt Services, to promote our Welfare and Salvation: which is the ſecond Step of his Humility.

The third is, *Being found in faſhion as a Man, he humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death.* This is the laſt degree of Miſery that any can be expos'd to; which with all good Men ends at their Death, and ceaſes in the Grave. To this our Saviour ſubmitted for our ſakes, and indeed to this end he took our Nature upon him, that he might therein ſuffer and die for our Sins: and greater Love than this can no Man ſhew, than for a Man to die for his Friend; tho greater than this did Chriſt ſhew to us, in

dying for his Enemies. And this he did freely and of his own accord, without any Deſire or Deſert of ours; for *he humbled himſelf* (ſaith the Text) *and became obedient unto Death.* None elſe could thus humble him, nor did he owe this Obedience to any, but only as their Surety and Undertaker for them: *No Man* (ſaith he) *taketh my Life from me, but I lay it down of my ſelf; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again:* John 10. 18. This was his own voluntary Act, to which nothing but his Love to Mankind, and his Deſire of their Salvation could lead him.

And now we are come very low in this point of his Humility; we have brought him even at death's door, and follow'd him to his Grave. But here is one thing more, that carries this matter yet farther; he became obedient to *Death*, not to an ordinary, fair, or honeſt Death, but to the Death of the Croſs, the worſt and foulleſt of all ways of dying; to an infamous, painful, and accurſed Death, the Death of Slaves, Robbers, and the vileſt Malefactors. There are ways of dying that are more eaſy and honourable, attended with Mourning and Funeral Pomp; but this of the Croſs was attended only with Shame, Cruelty, and a Curſe, for *curſed is every one that hangeth on a Tree.*

And thus we have brought our Saviour to the depth of his Humility, unleſs we will go one ſtep farther, and follow him into Hell, where he likewiſe deſcended; which tho not mention'd here, is yet elſewhere fully declar'd.

From whence I proceed, in the next place, as the Epiſtle leads me, to his Exaltation, in the following words; *Wherefore God alſo hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name which is above every Name; that at the Name of Jeſus every Knee ſhould bow, and every Tongue ſhould confeſs,* &c. *Wherefore*, that implies the Cauſe or Motive of his Exaltation: and what was that? Why, the foregoing words tell us, it was for his Humility; he humbled himſelf, and therefore he muſt be exalted. Humility is the true way to Honour; and they that are loweſt in their own eyes, are commonly higheſt in others. *Pride* (as the Wiſeman tells us) *commonly goes before a Fall*; and all Men generally hate, deſpiſe, and pull down a proud Man. God reſpecteth the Humble, but beholdeth the Proud afar off; yea, St. *Peter* tells us, that *God reſiſteth the Proud, and ſhews Grace and Favour only to the Humble.* For this cauſe it was that God

ſo

ſo highly exalted his Son, 'twas for his great Humility and Condeſcenſion in the Work of Man's Redemption. And here we find ſomething was done on God's part, and ſomething is to be done on ours, in order to his Exaltation: that which was done on God's part, reſpected both his Perſon and his Name.

As for his Perſon, 'tis ſaid here, that *God hath highly exalted him*; that is, his human Nature, for his divine Nature was not capable of Exaltation or Depreſſion; his eſſential Glory as God was ſtill the ſame, and cannot be increas'd or eclips'd: but 'twas his human Nature, in which he ſuffer'd, that was thus highly exalted: for God, as a Reward of his Sufferings, hath advanc'd him to the higheſt degree of Glory; he hath ſeated him at his own Right Hand, made him the ſole ſupreme Prince and Governour of his Church, and given him all Power both in Heaven and Earth.

As for his Name, God hath highly exalted that too; for *he hath given him a Name, that is above every Name.* The exalting a Perſon without a good Name, is rather a Diſparagement than a Dignity or Honour to him; for the higher he is, the more dirt will be caſt upon him, and he will become the more viſible Object of Envy and Contempt: but a good Name is ſweeter than precious Ointment, for it perfumes the Perſon, and tranſmits the Odor to Poſterity. And therefore God the Father, to make his Son's Exaltation compleat, gave him a *Name* too, and ſuch a one as is *above every Name.* And what Name was that? Why, 'twas the Name of *Jeſus*, which ſignifies a Saviour, and was by way of Excellence appropriated unto him: for tho others have been ſtiled Saviours, as *Joſhua* and others were, upon the account of ſome temporal Deliverances and Salvations wrought by them; yet the eternal Salvation and Redemption wrought by Chriſt for Mankind, was infinitely above any of theirs, and therefore this Name was in a far higher and more eminent manner given to him: yea, all other Saviours muſt be ſav'd by him, or elſe will be utterly loſt, and deſtitute of all Salvation. Thus hath God rewarded and exalted his Son above all others, both in his Perſon, and in his Name.

But, 2*dly*, ſomething is to be done on our part likewiſe, by way of honouring and exalting of him; and that is to be done not only inwardly by the Reverence and due Eſteem of the Mind, but outwardly by ſome ſuitable and humble Geſtures of the Body; of which two are here par-

ticularly mention'd, *viz.* the bowing of the Knee, and the confeſſing of the Tongue; both which are requir'd likewiſe, *Rom.* 11. 14.

1. This Name above all Names was given him, that *at the Name of Jeſus every Knee ſhould bow*; where we are commanded to bow not only to his Perſon, but to his Name, which includes in it ſuch a ſingular Dignity above all other Names or Titles, that 'tis worthy of the moſt eminent and ſuperlative Reſpect, and the lowlieſt Reverence we can pay to it. And indeed we ſhew what Reſpect we have to his Perſon, by the Reverence we ſhew to his Name; for *holy and reverend is his Name*, Pſal. 111. 9. The Apoſtle tells us, that there is no other Name given under Heaven, whereby we can be ſaved, but the Name of Jeſus; and how can we do leſs, than bow and ſhew Reverence to it? Yea, how can we do enough to extol that high and glorious Name, by which ſuch great things are done for us? This was one part of the Reward given to our Saviour for all his Suffenings, *viz.* that his Humiliation ſhould be requited with an Exaltation, and the Shame and Ignominy he underwent ſhould be rewarded with a Name of Dignity, Power, and Glory above all Names; at the mentioning whereof, every Knee ſhould bow, and all Creatures ſhould do obeyſance. This was promis'd to him by God the Father, and it lies upon us his Sons to perform and pay this Reverence to him; yea, this Homage is to be paid by all his Creatures, expreſs'd here by *things in Heaven*, which are the holy Angels, who are ſtill ſinging Praiſes and Hallelujahs to his Name: By *things in the Earth*, which are all Men, who are to bow and ſhew Reverence to his holy Name: And by *things under the Earth*, which are the Devils and evil Spirits, who are forc'd to fear and tremble at this great Name. In a word, we honour God by honouring of this Name, and by bowing and falling down to it we magnify and extol him that wears it: and therefore as he was exalted for his Humility, ſo let us exalt him ſtill by ours. This for the Knee, which we are to bow in honour to him: but that is not all, for,

2. He calls for the Tongue too, in the next words; *And that every Tongue ſhould confeſs, that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.* The Tongue is in Scripture ſaid to be the Glory of a Man, and is never more ſo, than when 'tis employ'd to the Glory of God. This is the uſe that we are here directed to put it to, to confeſs the Power,

Great-

Greatneſs, and Dominion of Chriſt; that by humbling himſelf he is become Lord of all, having all Power in Heaven and Earth, and ſo is able both to cruſh his Enemies, and to crown his Friends. But this confeſſing him to be Lord, implies not only his Ability to ſave; we are willing enough to own that, and to cry, *Lord ſave us, we periſh*: but likewiſe his Power to command; we are not ſo forward to confeſs that, nor to ſay, *Lord what wilt thou have us to do?* And yet this is the beſt way of confeſſing his Lordſhip, without which we do but mock him with an empty Title, and he will upbraid us, ſaying, *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the thing that I command you?* Let this then be our care, to aſcribe Honour, Might, and Dominion to the Son, as Lord of Heaven and Earth; but yet not ſo as to eclipſe or diminiſh, but to add to and illuſtrate the Glory of the Father, who ſent and ſo highly rewarded him.

This is the Sum of the Epiſtle for this Day. The Uſe the Apoſtle makes of it, is,

1. To exhort that the ſame Mind be in us that was in Chriſt Jeſus; that as he was no way high-minded, nor had any proud Looks, but humbled himſelf, and took upon him the Form of a Servant, tho he was Lord of all; ſo ſhould we be like-minded, not to mind high things, but to condeſcend to Men of low Eſtate. This Leſſon he himſelf would have us learn of him, for he was meek and lowly in Heart, and therefore would have us to baniſh all Pride and Vanity, which are ſo hateful to God and Man, and to follow the Example of his great Humility.

2. From Chriſt's being ſo highly exalted, after he had humbled himſelf, we learn that Humility is the beſt way to Honour; and they that will riſe in the Eſteem of God or Men, muſt be mean and lowly in their own eyes: for *he pulleth down the Mighty from their Seat, and exalteth the Humble and Meek.* Our Saviour hath told us, that *he that exalteth himſelf ſhall be abaſed, and he that humbleth himſelf ſhall be exalted.* They that ſeek for Honour by Arrogance, Self-conceit, and taking too much upon them, always work the wrong way; for Pride ever miſſeth its Aim, and never finds the Honour it ſeeks. They that would ſeek it aright, muſt go by the ways of Meekneſs and Humility, for they only lead to Exaltation.

3. From the Command, that at the Name of Jeſus every Knee ſhould bow, we learn upon what good Foundation that antient Practice of bowing at the Name of Jeſus is grounded. 'Tis, we ſee, a piece of that Honour that God the Father conferr'd upon his Son, for doing the Work of Man's Redemption: and ſhall we unworthily deny him that Honour, which was granted him merely for our ſakes? Certainly they whoſe Knees are too ſtiff to bow to him, will find his Hand too ſhort to ſave them, or to reach out any Bleſſings unto them. Neither ſhould our Tongue be loſs ſparing in confeſſing Chriſt to be Lord, to the Glory of God the Father; for *with the Heart Man believeth, but with the Mouth Confeſſion is made unto Salvation.*

Laſtly, From Chriſt's being obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Croſs, for our ſakes, we may learn for ever to remember that his ineſtimable Love; and not to neglect thoſe Pledges of it, in which he hath will'd us to commemorate it. "Lord, haſt thou lov'd us ſo much, as "to endure the greateſt Torments of Body and Soul in "our behalf; and ſhall we love thee ſo little, as to ſhew "no regard or remembrance of all this? God forbid! Let "that be far from us." To avoid which, let us prepare to meet our Lord at his own Table, there to celebrate the Memory of what he hath done and ſuffer'd for us, and to receive the Benefits purchas'd by both, to the eternal Joy and Comfort of our Souls.

DIS-

DISCOURSE LIV.

The GOSPEL for the Sunday before *Easter*.

Matthew xxvii. 1——55.

When the Morning was come, all the Chief Priests and Elders of the People took counsel against Jesus, to put him to death. And when they had bound him, they led him away, and deliver'd him to Pontius Pilate, *&c.*

THIS Gospel, with the rest that follow on each Day of this Holy Week, give us an ample Account of the Death and Passion of our Blessed Saviour, together with the many Circumstances that went before, and came after it. But the better to consider and contract the several Scenes, Steps, and Degrees of this direful Tragedy, 'twill be requisite to discourse of these several Parts of it.

First, Of their apprehending or taking our Saviour.
Secondly, Of their Arraignment and Examination of him.
Thirdly, Of their condemning and passing Sentence upon him.
Lastly, Of the Execution of the Sentence, together with the Mockery, Shame, and Cruelty exercis'd upon him, in putting him to death. Of each particularly, as related by the Evangelists. And,

First, Of the apprehending or taking of him, which you know is the first Act of Justice exercis'd on Offenders, who are wont to be apprehended and arraign'd, before they are condemn'd or executed. Suitable whereunto, the Sons of Violence laid hands upon our Saviour to take him; which was done by the Counsel or Conspiracy of the Chief Priests and Elders: for we read, that they *held a Consultation, how they might take Jesus by Subtlety, and carry him away*; *Mat.*

Mat. 26. 4. and here, that *they took counsel to put him to death.* But tho his frequent Presence at *Jerusalem* seem'd to give them fair Opportunities of effecting their Design, yet the Reputation he had with the People, made them not so forward to embrace them; and therefore they dealt under-hand with one of his own Disciples, corrupting him with Mony, to betray him with the greater Secrecy into their hands.

The Place where they apprehended him, was in the Garden of *Gethsemane*, where after the Treachery of *Judas* in betraying him, a Band of Soldiers seiz'd on his Person, haled him away before *Pilate*, and from thence into Prison; where he met with no better Company, than an infamous Robber, named *Barrabbas*, who yet, by a Custom of releasing one at the Feast, was dismiss'd at the Request of the People, whilst our Saviour was sacrific'd to the Clamour and Crucifiges of the Multitude.

For the Manner of apprehending him, St. *Luke* informs us, that *they came out against him as against a Thief, with Swords and Staves*, Luke 22. 52. This great Exemplar of Meekness and Patience was thus roughly handled by the merciless Soldiers: and tho *Peter*, out of a high Resentment hereof, offer'd to make Resistance, by drawing his Sword and cutting off the Ear of one of the High Priest's Servants; yet our Saviour sharply check'd his inconsiderate Zeal and Rashness, partly because they did all by the Authority of the Magistrate, against whom he would not allow or encourage the least Resistance; and partly, because it behov'd him to suffer these things, for the compleating of Man's Redemption.

Having thus taken him, they cast their Cords on him, and carry'd him *away bound, and deliver'd him to* Pontius Pilate *the Governour*, ver. 2. At the sight hereof, *Judas who had betray'd him*, was struck with a great Remorse of Conscience, and *repented him* of what he had done; *bringing again the thirty Pieces of Silver to the Chief Priests and Elders*, and *saying* with no small Trouble of Mind, *I have sinned, in that I have betray'd the innocent Blood.* But they with little or no regard leaving him to his own Guilt, led him to despair; so that he *cast the Pieces of Silver in the Temple, and departed, and went and hang'd himself*, ver. 3, 4, 5. His guilty Conscience flew in his face, and fill'd him with that Horror and Despair, that would give him no rest, till he had dispatch'd and made away with himself.

In

In the Acts of the Apostles 'tis said, that *falling down headlong on his face, he burst asunder in the midst, and his Bowels gush'd out*; Chap. 1. 18. The Chief Priests finding the Mony in the Temple, would not put it into the Treasury, because it was the Price of Blood: but, as the following Verses tell us, *they bought with it a Potter's Field, to bury Strangers in, call'd therefore the Field of Blood*; according to a Prophecy of *Jeremy*, extant in *Zech.* 11. 12, 13. and suppos'd to be receiv'd from him.

Now this Circumstance of Christ's being taken and apprehended, was prefigur'd in the Old Testament, by *Joseph*'s being taken and carry'd prisoner into *Egypt*, Gen. 39. And was likewise foretold by the Psalmist, saying, *The Kings of the Earth set themselves, and the Rulers take counsel against the Lord and his Anointed*; Psal. 2. 2. This for the first Act of his Sufferings, *viz.* his Apprehension.

The *Second* is, his Arraignment or Accusation before *Pilate*. And that begins, *ver.* 11, &c. where *Jesus standing before* Pilate, *the Governour ask'd him, saying, Art thou the King of the* Jews? that is, Art thou the Messias so long promis'd and expected by that People? To whom he reply'd, *Thou sayest it*; and sayest true, for so I am: *Mark* 14. 62.

But *when the Chief Priests and Elders began to accuse him*, laying many things to his charge, he knowing there was no manner of Truth or Reason in what they alledg'd, *answer'd nothing*, making no Reply. At which the Governour said to him, *Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?* But he persisted still in his Silence, and *answer'd them to never a word*; *insomuch that the Governour marvelled greatly*. And when the People call'd loudly for releasing *Barrabbas* at the Feast, and destroying *Jesus*, he askid of them, *Why, what Evil hath he done?* What have you to alledg against him? But they supposing *Pilate* inclin'd to save him, were the more earnest and vehement in their Clamours to put him to death, *saying, Let him be crucify'd*. *Pilate* here began to be in a great strait, knowing that for no capital Crime, but for *meer Envy they had deliver'd him* to him: which Trouble was the more increas'd by a Message sent to him by his Wife, whilst he was sitting on the Judgment-Seat, saying, *Have thou nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffer'd many things this day in a Dream because of him.*

Pilate

Pilate therefore, to ſatisfy his Conſcience and his Wife, try'd all ways to releaſe him and let him go, declaring his Opinion of his Innocency, and ſaying more than once, that he could find no fault in him. But nothing he could ſay or do would appeaſe the Rage of the rude Multitude, eſpecially being ſet on by the Chief Prieſts and Elders: ſo that inſtead of allaying their Violence, their Fury increas'd, redoubling their Clamours, and crying more exceedingly, *Crucify him, Crucify him.* Inſomuch that *when* Pilate *ſaw he could prevail nothing, but that rather a Tumult was made, he took Water, and waſh'd his Hands before the Multitude, ſaying, I am innocent of the Blood of this juſt Perſon, ſee ye to it:* meaning, that by that Ceremony he in the preſence of them all clear'd himſelf of all Guilt, and laid the whole of that matter upon them. Upon which words, the People all reply'd, *His Blood be on us and our Children.* So eagerly did they thirſt for his Blood, that they readily took all the Guilt of it upon themſelves and their Poſterity. And indeed by that Imprecation they entail'd upon them the Wrath of God, the Divine Vengeance having purſu'd that People and Nation ever ſince.

After this, *Pilate* at the Importunity of the People *releaſed* Barrabbas; and then proceeded to *ſcourge Jeſus*, hoping that would ſatisfy them, without inflicting any farther Puniſhment: and therefore we find him ſaying, *Luke* 23. 16. that neither he nor *Herod* could find any thing in him worthy of Death; *I will therefore* (ſaith he) *chaſtiſe him and releaſe him.* But the People not content with that, but ſtill preſſing for his Crucifixion, *Pilate* added that to his Scourging, *and deliver'd him up to be crucify'd.* And this will lead to the

Third Step or Degree of his Paſſion, *viz.* his Condemnation, or the paſſing Sentence upon him; which was done by *Pilate*, who, as St. *Luke* tells us, *gave Sentence that it ſhould be as they requir'd*, Chap. 23. 24. meaning, as the *Jews* requir'd, which was to be crucify'd.

But how came *Pilate*, knowing his Innocency, and ſo often declaring that he found no fault in him, to paſs Sentence upon him againſt the Judgment and Sentence of his own Conſcience? Why, this he did, partly for fear of the People, whoſe Clamours were ſo vehement and malicious, that he fear'd what their Outrage and Violence might [illegible]em to; and partly, for fear of the Emperor, whom he

he had diſpleas'd before; and doubted how far any Favour to one that pretended to be a King, and ſo an Enemy to *Caſar*, might farther incenſe him: tho in truth he was not excuſable in either.

After this Sentence paſt upon our Saviour to be crucify'd, he was deliver'd up to a Band of Soldiers, who exercis'd many Acts of Mockery and Cruelty upon him before the Execution: for *they ſtripped him of his Clothes, and put on him a ſcarlet Robe*; the true Emblem of their crimſon Sins. Becauſe he ſtil'd himſelf a King, they prepar'd and put on him all the mock Enſigns of Royalty. Inſtead of a Crown of Gold to adorn his Head, *they platted for him a Crown of Thorns*, to gore his Temples. Becauſe he ſhould not want a Scepter, *they put a Reed into his Right Hand*, and then in mockery bow'd their heads to him, ſaying, *Hail King of the* Jews! And having thus inſulted and expos'd him with all the Pageantry and Ceremonys of a Mock-King, *they took the Robe off from him, and put on his own Rayment, and led him away to be crucify'd.* And this will lead me to the

Fourth Step of his Sufferings, which was the Execution of the Sentence. But becauſe there were ſome previous Circumſtances of Shame and Cruelty, that were wont to go before Crucifixion, let us ſee how they were executed upon our Bleſſed Saviour. As,

1*ſt*, They that were to be crucify'd were made to bear their Croſs to the Place of Execution, which was always without the City. So *Plutarch* tells us, that Malefactors led forth to Execution, each one bears his own Croſs; or if they were like to faint, then ſome Porters or Burden-bearers were forc'd to carry it after them. Accordingly St. *John* tells us, that Jeſus being led away to Execution, bore his own Croſs, *John* 19. 17. till finding him oppreſs'd and ſinking under the weight, they met with one *Simon* of *Cyrene*, and him they compell'd to bear it for him. This was prefigur'd by *Iſaac*'s bearing the Wood for the ſacrificing of himſelf; and to this our Saviour alludes, in bidding his Diſciples to take up their Croſs and follow him.

2*dly*, They that were to be crucify'd, were firſt ſcourg'd: ſo St. *Jerom* tells us, *Legibus Romanis ſancitum eſt, ut qui crucifigitur prius flagellis verberetur:* 'Tis commanded by the Laws of the *Romans*, that he who is to be crucify'd, be firſt ſcourg'd. Accordingly, *Pilate*'s Sentence was firſt to ſcourge, and then to lead him away to be crucify'd. As he

was

was led along, they ſcoff'd, revil'd, and ſpit upon him, and follow'd him with the bittereſt Taunts and Reproaches that Malice could invent. With theſe and many more Indignities they brought him to a place call'd *Golgotha*, which is by Interpretation the Place of a Skull; ſo call'd from the Bones and Skulls of Malefactors that were laid up there, where there was a deep Cavity or Hole in a Rock, that ſerv'd for a Charnel-Houſe or Repoſitory of dead Mens Bones; where likewiſe were depoſited the Croſſes that were brought by Perſons to the place of Execution.

After this, they brought him to Mount *Calvary* about a Mile diſtant from *Jeruſalem*, ſuppos'd to be the ſame with Mount *Moriah*, upon which *Abraham* was appointed by God to offer up his only Son *Iſaac*; and was the Place where this great Sacrifice of the Son of God was to be offer'd.

Arriv'd now at the Place of his Sufferings, they make all things ready for his Execution; before which there was a Cuſtom among the *Jews*, grounded upon thoſe words of *Solomon*, *Give ſtrong Drink to them that are ready to periſh, and Wine to thoſe that be of heavy Hearts*; Prov. 31. 6. From hence, I ſay, there grew a Cuſtom of giving to condemned Perſons before their Suffering ſome comforting and ſtrengthning Drink, mingled with ſome aromatical Ingredients, that had both a ſupporting and ſtupifying Quality. According to this Cuſtom they brought to our Saviour ſome of this compounded Liquor, which their Malice had mingled with Gall; thereby changing the Cup of Conſolation and Refreſhment, that was wont to be given to condemn'd Perſons, into a nauſeous, bitter, and poiſonous Cup: *They gave him Vinegar to drink, mingled with Gall.* Which Circumſtance of Barbarity was foretold by the Pſalmiſt in the Deſcription of his Sufferings, ſaying, *They gave me Gall to eat, and when I was thirſty, they gave me Vinegar to drink*; Pſal. 69. 21, 22. This bitter Potion when he had taſted, 'tis ſaid, *he would not drink it.* Tho he at that time labour'd under a very great Thirſt, yet he would not drink it, becauſe he would not accelerate his own Death; and being to pay our Debt to the uttermoſt, would not take any thing that might any way lighten or mitigate it.

After this, they proceeded to crucify him, nailing his Feet to the upright Beam of the Croſs, and his Hands with the Arms ſtretch'd out to the tranſverſe Piece at the Top; as 'tis repreſented in a Crucifix. This was foretold by the Pſalmiſt,

Psalmist, saying, *They pierc'd my Hands and my Feet*, Psal. 22. 16. Being thus fasten'd to the Cross, the Executioners strip'd him of his Clothes, *parting his Garments, and casting lots for them*; *that it might be fulfill'd what was spoken by the Prophet, They parted my Garments among them, and upon my Vesture did they cast lots.* They divided his Garments into four Parts (as St. *John* tells us) and gave to each Soldier a Part; but for his Coat, that was without Seam, that they would not rent, but cast lots for it, *John* 19. 24, 25. This being done, *Pilate* according to the Custom of the *Romans*, order'd his Accusation or pretended Crime to be written over his Head in capital Letters in these words, *THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE* JEWS: which that it might be the better read and understood by all, St. *Luke* tells us, *was written* in the three great Languages, *Latin, Greek and Hebrew*; Luke 23. 38.

But to make his Death the more infamous, he *was crucify'd between two Thieves, the one at his right Hand, and the other at his Left*; as if he had been the Arch-malefactor. Which Thieves upbraided him for pretending to be the Son of God, and yet coming to so shameful and miserable an end; *ver.* 38, 44. tho St. *Luke* affirms this of one of them only, and not of both, *Luke* 23. 39. This was propheſy'd of him by *Isaias*, saying, *He was numbred among Transgressors*, Isa. 53. 12. While he was hanging on the Cross, *The Multitude that passed by, reviled him, wagging their Heads*, expressing both in their Words and Gestures the greatest Scorn and Detestation of him; saying in derision to him, *Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three days, save thy self; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross.* Likewise also *the Chief Priests, with the Scribes and Elders, mocked* and upbraided him with his former Miracles, willing him now to shew one upon himself, saying, *He saved others, himself he cannot save: if he be the King of* Israel, *let him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe him.* They twitted him with his relying upon God, and the Relation he pretended to him; *He trusted in God* (say they) *let him deliver him now, if he will have him; for he said, I am the Son of God.*

Now from the sixth Hour, there was Darkness over all the Land, until the ninth Hour; that is, from twelve of the Clock at noon, till three, according to our Computation, there was a general Eclipse or Darkning of the Sun over all the Land of *Judea*, and the Country thereabout; or as,

others

others will have it, over all the Parts of the World. Now this Eclipſe was not natural, the Moon being then at the full, but ſupernatural and miraculous, to ſignify that the Sun of Righteouſneſs was then about to be eclips'd, and for a while to be overcaſt with Darkneſs: which made him ſay, *This is your Hour, and the Power of Darkneſs*; Luke 22. 53.

About the ninth Hour, Jeſus in the Extremity of his Sufferings ſeeming to be deſerted of his Father, cry'd out in the Anguiſh of his Soul, *Eli, Eli*, &c. *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* Which words are found in that prophetick Pſalm of *David*, viz. *Pſal.* 22. which was fulfill'd in this direful Tragedy of the Son of God.

But his barbarous Enemies deſiſted not from their Reproaches even to the laſt Gaſp; for hearing him twice pronounce the word *Eli*, they mockingly ſaid, *He calleth for* Elias, *let us ſee whether he will come and ſave him.*

In this his laſt Agony, Jeſus ſaying, that he thirſted, as it were to take off the laſt Dregs of the Cup of God's Wrath againſt Sinners, *One of them ſtraitway ran, and took a Spunge, and filled it with Vinegar, and put it on a Reed, and gave him to drink.* After which, he *cry'd again with a loud Voice*; and uttering (as St. *Luke* tells us) theſe words, *Father, into thy hands I commit my Spirit, he yielded up the Ghoſt.*

Thus died the Son of God a cruel and ignominious, but withal an innocent and glorious Death; which was follow'd with many prodigious Signs of Wonder and Sorrow: for *behold the Veil of the Temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom, and the Earth did quake, and the Rocks rent, and the Graves were open'd, and many Bodies of Saints which ſlept aroſe, and came out of the Graves after his Reſurrection, and went into the Holy Place, and appear'd unto many.* The whole Creation ſeem'd to groan and lament the Fall of ſo great a Perſon; the Sun drew in its Light, and was covered with a Veil of Darkneſs; the Earth trembled, and ſhook with great Convulſions; the Heavens were all overcaſt and cloth'd in black, as the chief Mourners at his Funeral; and all things but theſe unrelenting *Jews* were appall'd and confounded at the Paſſion of our Lord. *Now when the Centurion and they that were with him watching Jeſus, ſaw the Earthquake*, which is ſaid to be the greateſt that was ever known, they began to quake themſelves; for when *they ſaw thoſe things that were done, they fear'd greatly, ſaying,*

ſaying, Truly this was the Son of God. They were fill'd with Terrour, their Hearts accuſing them for what they had ſaid and done againſt him; not wagging their Heads as they did before in deriſion, but ſmiting their Breaſts, for fear of what the Indignities offer'd to the Son of God might bring upon them.

This is the Sum of the Goſpel for this Day; which may teach us,

1. The heinous and provoking Nature of Sin, that requir'd the Blood of the Son of God for its Expiation. If any can be ſo dangerouſly miſtaken, as to think Sin but a ſlight matter, let him enter into the High-Prieſt's Palace, the Judgment-Hall, and Mount *Calvary*, and there ſee what it coſt our Saviour to do it away: let him take a walk in the Garden of *Gethſemane*, and behold there the Pangs, Throws and Agonies of a bleeding and crucify'd Saviour; and then he may ſoon perceive Sin, which he now makes light of, to be the heavieſt and moſt intolerable Burden in the World.

2. We learn hence the infinite Love of God the Father, in giving his Son; and likewiſe of God the Son, in giving himſelf to death for us: this is ſuch an unparallel'd Act of Kindneſs and Condeſcenſion, that St. *John* was at a loſs how to expreſs it, ſaying, *God ſo loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son*, &c. And St. *Paul*, like one wrapt up with Wonder and Aſtoniſhment, cries out, *O the Height, and Depth, the Length and Breadth of the Love of God, that paſſeth Knowledg!*

3. From Chriſt's Death and Paſſion, we may learn Patience under all the Sufferings that befal us. Shall we grudg but to ſip of that bitter Cup, which he drank off to the very Dregs? And when his way was ſtrew'd with Thorns, ſhall we expect nothing but Roſes? When he hath borne the Heat of the Day, and the heavy Burden of God's Wrath, ſhall we droop and faint under a few light and gentle Afflictions? Yea, when we conſider that all that he underwent was only in our behalf, nothing ſhould be thought difficult, that we ſuffer in his Cauſe; eſpecially having forewarn'd us of the Croſs, and plac'd it in the High-way to a never-fading Crown of Bliſs and Glory.

Laſtly, Let us learn from hence thankfully to remember the Death and Paſſion of our Saviour, eſpecially in that memorial Feaſt which he himſelf inſtituted for his own Re-

membrance. *Do this in remembrance of me*, was his laſt dying Requeſt, which we ought therefore never to forget; So ſhall we partake now of the Benefits of his Paſſion, and hereafter of the Glories and Triumphs of his Reſurrection, *&c.*

DISCOURSE LV.

The EPISTLE for *Good-Friday.*

Heb. x. 1——26.

The Law having a Shadow of good things to come, and not the very Image of the things, can never with thoſe Sacrifices, which they offer'd Year by Year continually, make the Comers thereunto perfect; for then would they not have ceas'd to be offer'd: becauſe that the Worſhippers once purg'd, ſhould have had no more Conſcience of Sins, &c.

THE three Collects for this Day of our Saviour's Paſſion, beſeech Almighty God graciouſly to behold his Family the Church, for which our Lord Jeſus Chriſt was contented to die; and that he, by whoſe Spirit the whole Body of the Church is govern'd and ſanctify'd, would receive the Supplications and Prayers offer'd up by all the Members in it: As alſo to have mercy upon all *Jews*, *Turks*, Infidels, and Hereticks; that by taking away all the Hindrances of their Converſion, they may be fetch'd home to his Flock, and be made one Fold under one Shepherd, Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Where we are taught to pray as Chriſt did for his very Enemies: and as he expreſs'd the height of his Love this Day, by dying for them; ſo does the Church the height of her Charity, by praying for them.

The Epiſtle for the Day ſets forth the Excellency, the Extent, the End, and the All-ſufficiency of the Sacrifice of Chriſt's Death: in all which it vaſtly exceeds all the Sacrifices and Expiations under the Law, which were but

so many Types and faint Representations of this great propitiatory Sacrifice under the Gospel. So the first Verse tells us, *The Law having a Shadow of good things to come, and not the very Image of the things*; meaning, that it contain'd only an imperfect Shadow or Resemblance of the Mercies that were to come under the Gospel, and not the Substance or lively Representation of the things themselves; and so the Difference between them was the same that there is between the rough Draught of a Picture, and one that is finish'd and drawn to the Life in all its Lineaments and Colours. And therefore *the Law could never, with those Sacrifices which they offer'd Year by Year continually, make the Comers thereunto perfect*: that is, those reiterated Sacrifices, which for their Imperfection were to be so often repeated, could never purify the Conscience, or work out any perfect Pardon or Peace; for if they could, *then would they not have ceas'd to be offer'd, because that the Worshippers once purg'd, should have had no more Conscience of Sins.* If the legal Sacrifices could have brought the Comers thereunto to perfection, so as to procure a full Pardon and purging away all Sin, then would the Offering of them have still continu'd, nor would there have been any need of any other future Sacrifice; for if the former could have effectually done the Work for which they were offer'd, there could have been no want of any later Sacrifice to supply the Defect. As in a Cure, when 'tis thorowly wrought, there can be no need of applying another Medicine; so the Conscience once thorowly purg'd and reconcil'd to God, whereby all former and future Sins are wholly remitted and done away, would have no more Sense of Guilt, and consequently no more need of any farther Sacrifice: whereas *in those Sacrifices there is a Remembrance again made of Sins every Year.* In the legal Sacrifices there was only a Commemoration of Sins, not a purging them away; and therefore both the Sacrifice and the Remembrance were renew'd every Year, and that was done on the Day of Expiation, when they were wont to call to mind not only the Sins of the Year past, but the Sins of former Years, for which they had offer'd before at the time of committing them, to signify, that there had not yet been any full and perfect Expiation made, but they expected one to come, which is that one true Sacrifice of Christ, that was alone able to satisfy Divine Justice for all Sins.

This could not be done by any or all the Sacrifices under the Law; *For it is not poſſible that the Blood of Bulls and of Goats ſhould take away Sins.* 'Tis not in the power of brute Beaſts to make an Atonement for the Sins of Men, nor can the Blood of any inferiour Creatures purify the Conſcience, or pacify the Wrath of God for them. It requir'd a higher and nobler Sacrifice to purge away our Guilt, and nothing leſs than the Blood of the Son of God was able to effect it; for Satisfaction for Sin muſt be made by the ſame Nature that committed it, for which reaſon he became the Son of Man, to make Atonement for us. Beſides which, the Satisfaction was to be of an infinite Merit before God, which no Offerings of brute Beaſts could be; whereas the Sacrifice of Chriſt was abundantly ſuch, being the offering up of the Blood of the Son of God.

Wherefore when he cometh into the World, he ſaith, Sacrifice and Offering thou wouldſt not, but a Body haſt thou prepar'd me. Theſe words are quoted out of the 40th Pſalm, ver. 6, 7. where the Pſalmiſt brings in Chriſt, as the Meſſiah, thus ſpeaking to his Father; Sacrifice and Offering thou deſireſt not, but that which thou wouldſt have is a human Body, prepar'd to ſuffer for the doing away of Sins, and the obtaining Mercy and Pardon of them; and ſuch a Body haſt thou prepar'd for me, fram'd and ſanctify'd by the Holy Ghoſt, which I muſt offer up upon the Croſs, for an Expiation of the Sins of the World. The words here render'd, *A Body haſt thou prepar'd me*, in the Original are, *Mine Ear haſt thou pierc'd*; ſo they are render'd in the Pſalms, *Mine Ear haſt thou open'd*; to ſignify, that as the Servant's Ear was to be nail'd to the Door-Poſt, *Deut.* 15. 17. ſo Chriſt's Body was to be nail'd to the Croſs, to fit it to be that perfect and compleat Sacrifice that was typify'd by thoſe under the Law, and to ſupply the Defects of them. For

In Burnt-Offerings and Sacrifices for Sin (ſaith he) *thou haſt had no pleaſure*; that is, I know the Offerings and legal Sacrifices were not ſo acceptable in thy ſight, as not being able to ſatisfy thy Wrath, or reconcile thee to Sinners: And therefore Chriſt, to ſhew his Readineſs to undertake and accompliſh it, adds, *Then, ſaid I, lo, I come (in the Volume of the Book it is written of me) to do thy Will, O God:* that is, I declar'd my Willingneſs to perform all that which was agreed between us from all Eternity, and in time reveal'd to the Prophets, and by them deliver'd

down

ſhown to the laſt Ages; that I am that Lamb of God, decreed to be ſlain before the Foundation of the World. Accordingly, behold I come to do thy Will, O God, and to ſuffer all thou requireſt of me to compleat the Work of Man's Redemption.

From hence the Apoſtle argues the Weakneſs and Deficiency of all the legal Sacrifices and Oblations, in order to the Remiſſion of Sin; and the All-ſufficiency of Chriſt's ſacrificing himſelf to that end, in the following words: *Above, when he ſaid, Sacrifice, and Burnt-Offerings, and Offering for Sin thou wouldſt not, neither hadſt Pleaſure therein, which are offer'd by the Law; then, ſaid he, Lo! I come to do thy Will, O God: he taketh away the firſt, that he may eſtabliſh the ſecond.* The Senſe of which words is, that the Sacrifices appointed by *Moſes*'s Law are of no force or efficacy at all with God, but are to give place to the Sacrifice and Sufferings of Chriſt: the former being annul'd and aboliſh'd by Chriſt's Death, vaniſh as Types and Shadows do at the Coming of the Subſtance; the latter ſucceeding, and being ſet up in their room, renders the other uſeleſs. By which we ſee the Folly and Vanity of the *Jews*, in ſeeking Juſtification by the Works of the Law, which have no Prevalence or Acceptance at all with God, and diſclaiming the Merits of Chriſt, by which alone they can be juſtify'd and ſav'd.

Hitherto the Apoſtle hath been ſhewing the Impotence, the Inſufficiency, and the Imperfection of all the Sacrifices under the Law; partly from the frequent reiterating and repeating of them, partly from their utter Inability to purge away Sin, and partly from their yielding to a nobler and better Sacrifice under the Goſpel: all which ſhew them to be only ſhadows of good things to come, but the Subſtance is Chriſt. And therefore

The remaining Part of the Epiſtle is taken up in ſetting forth the Excellence and Perfection of Chriſt's Sacrifice above the former, together with ſome uſeful Leſſons infer'd from it. The tranſcendent Perfection of it appears,

1ſt, By the bleſſed Fruits and Effects of it: for 'tis *by this Will of God, that we are ſanctify'd thro the Offering of the Body of Jeſus Chriſt*; ver. 10. By this we that were guilty appear innocent and righteous before God; not by any perſonal Righteouſneſs of our own, but thro the Merit of his Atonement. 'Twas impoſſible, we ſee, for the Blood of Bulls and of Goats, or of any other brute Beaſts, to

take away Sin, that had not Merit or Value enough to purchaſe or procure ſuch a Bleſſing: but *the Blood of Chriſt cleanſes us from all Sin*; not from this or that only, but from all Iniquity. So our Church teaches us, that by one Oblation of himſelf, he made a full, perfect, and ſufficient Sacrifice and Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World; which plainly demonſtrates its infinite and tranſcendent Worth and Excellency. Again,

2*ly*, The Apoſtle proves the Dignity and Perfection of Chriſt's Sacrifice, from its being but once offer'd, and needing not to be reiterated or offer'd up again. So we read, *ver.* 10. that Chriſt's Body was offer'd up *once for all*; that one Oblation of himſelf to Death for us hath done the whole Work, and compleated all at once. 'Twas the Weakneſs, the Diſgrace, and the Imperfection of the legal Sacrifices, that they ſtood in need of a conſtant Repetition: The High Prieſt went every Year, on the Great Day of Expiation, into the Holy of Holies, to offer up the yearly Sacrifice, *Heb.* 9. 25. And here we are told of the inferiour Prieſts, that *they ſtand daily miniſtring, and offering oftentimes the ſame Sacrifices, which can never take away Sins*; ver. 11. But 'tis the Glory, the Greatneſs, and the Perfection of Chriſt's Sacrifice, that it did all the Buſineſs at once, and wants no Reiteration: *He needeth not daily* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *as thoſe High Prieſts, to offer up Sacrifice, firſt for his own Sins, and then for the Peoples; for this he did once, when he offer'd up himſelf:* Heb. 7. 27. And here the ſame Apoſtle tells us, that *this Man, after he had offer'd one Sacrifice for Sins, for ever ſat down at the Right Hand of God*; ver. 12. Having by one compleat Oblation and Atonement ſatisfy'd for the Sins of the whole World, he receiv'd the high and juſt Reward of it, to be ſeated for ever at the right Hand of God, *from thenceforth expecting till his Enemies be made his Footſtool*; triumphing over them at preſent, and ſhortly ſubduing and making them all ſubject to him.

But for his Friends and Followers, *he hath, by one Offering, perfected for ever them that are ſanctify'd*; meaning, that he hath fully purg'd away their Sins, reconcil'd them unto God, and juſtify'd them by his Grace: Of all which he hath given *the Holy Ghoſt as a Witneſs to us*, ſaying in the Holy Scriptures, *This is the Covenant that I will make with them after thoſe days, I will put my Laws into their Hearts, and in their Minds will I write them, and their Sins*

and

and their Iniquities will I remember no more: that is, he would ſeal a new Covenant to them by his Blood, in which he would firſt purify their Hearts and Minds, and after pardon all their Tranſgreſſions. From whence he argues the Validity of Chriſt's Sacrifice, that having attain'd its End, there can be no farther neceſſity of repeating it: for *where Remiſſion of theſe is, there is no more offering for Sin*; ver. 18.

By all this we learn the Abſurdity as well as Impiety of the Sacrifice of the Maſs, us'd and taught in the Church of *Rome*, whereby Chriſt is offer'd up again in every Sacrament; contrary to what St. *Paul* here affirms, that Jeſus was to be offer'd up but once only, and by that one Oblation he hath perfected for ever them that are ſanctify'd, ſo that any farther Oblation of him muſt be altogether needleſs; yea, 'tis indeed impoſſible: for Chriſt's Body being in Heaven, and ſeated at the right Hand of God, cannot in this manner be fetch'd thence, and offer'd up again. Beſides, to teach that Chriſt is daily offer'd up in the Sacrament, is to believe what he did on the Croſs not to be ſufficient, and ſo to derogate from the Dignity and Efficacy of his moſt meritorious Sacrifice; yea, 'tis to equal the daily Offerings in *Moſes*'s Law with the Death of our Saviour, by continually reiterating it like theirs. Chriſt declar'd upon the Croſs, that the Work of our Redemption was finiſh'd; and therefore the Fathers generally tell us, that there is but one Sacrifice, and that the Sacrament is only a Memorial of it: in which we are not to renew, but to remember what was done and purchas'd by it with our greateſt Praiſes and Thankſgivings; and all that is now left us to do, is by Faith to apply to our ſelves the Benefits of it, and to pray it may be effectual to us.

From hence the Apoſtle proceeds to recount ſome of the great Privileges obtain'd by this meritorious Sacrifice, in the next words; *Having therefore, Brethren, Boldneſs to enter into the Holy of Holies by the Blood of Jeſus, by a new and living way*, not known before, *which he hath conſecrated for us thro the Veil, that is to ſay, his Fleſh*; meaning, that we have free Acceſs unto God, to offer our Prayers and Praiſes to him by the Merits of Chriſt, a new and living way, not by dead Sacrifices as before, but by a way conſecrated thro the Veil of his Fleſh: where the Apoſtle alludes to the Veil or Curtain that cover'd the Sanctuary, by which as the High Prieſt enter'd into the Holy of Holies, ſo are

we now admitted into the Preſence of God, thro the black Veil of his Sufferings, which he underwent for us in his Fleſh. *And having ſuch an High Prieſt over the Houſe of God*, to take care of his Church, and every faithful Member of it, to preſent their Prayers unto God, and to procure the Acceptance of them, by the Merits and Virtue of his Interceſſion: having, I ſay, ſuch high and eminent Privileges by Chriſt's Oblation of himſelf for us, the Apoſtle infers from thence two or three uſeful and excellent Leſſons. As,

1. *Let us draw near with a true Heart, in full Aſſurance of Faith, having our Hearts ſprinkled from an evil Conſcience, and our Bodies waſh'd with pure Water*; ver. 22. that is, let us ſerve God with a ſincere and unfeign'd Worſhip, with a firm Perſuaſion of finding Acceptance with him, having our Souls purify'd from all inward Pollution, and our Bodies cleans'd from all outward Defilement. The Expreſſion of *ſprinkling the Heart from an evil Conſcience*, alludes to a Cuſtom under the Law, where he that had touch'd any unclean thing, was to be ſprinkled by the Prieſt before he enter'd the Congregation: And *the Body's being waſh'd with pure Water*, alludes to the Laver of Regeneration under the Goſpel, where baptiz'd Perſons are waſh'd from their original Corruption. And both Expreſſions imply, that Chriſt's ſacrificing himſelf for us ſhould engage us to the greateſt Purity both of Soul and Body, which muſt be therefore minded by all, that would receive any benefit by the ſhedding of his Blood.

2. *Let us hold faſt the Profeſſion of the Faith without wavering, for he is faithful that hath promis'd*; ver. 23. that is, let us be conſtant to the Faith of a crucify'd Saviour, and be as ready to profeſs it with the Mouth, as to confeſs it in the Heart. Let no Temptations either of Proſperity or Adverſity ſhake our Belief of him, or make us in the leaſt waver in it; but rather ſay with St. *Paul*, *We preach Chriſt crucify'd, tho it be a Stumbling-block to the* Jews, *and to the* Greeks *Fooliſhneſs*. And elſewhere, *I am not aſham'd of the Goſpel of Chriſt, which is the Power of God unto Salvation; to the* Jew *firſt, and alſo to the* Greek: yea, he was ſo far from being aſham'd, that he glory'd in the Croſs, and prefer'd it above all the Triumphs of *Rome*. He told the *Corinthians*, that he deſir'd to *know nothing among them ſave Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucify'd*: And the *Philippians*, that *he counted all things but Loſs and Dung, in compariſon*

of

of the Excellency of that Divine Knowledg. Whatever Dangers and Diſcouragements then we may meet with, let us ever own and put our Truſt in a dying Saviour; for he hath promis'd to ſtand by thoſe that ſtand firm to their Profeſſion, and we may ſafely depend upon his Fidelity, for he is faithful that hath promis'd.

3. *Let us conſider one another, to provoke unto Love, and to good Works*; ver. 24. that is, let the Senſe of Chriſt's Love in dying for us, kindle in our Breaſt the moſt ardent Flames of Love towards him, and likewiſe to one another, whom he hath made Partakers of the Benefits of his Death. Let us call upon each other, to expreſs this Love by all the Acts of Duty and Thankfulneſs, abounding in Works of Piety and Charity, knowing that *Chriſt gave himſelf for us, to redeem us from all Iniquity, and to purify to himſelf a peculiar People, zealous of good Works.*

Laſtly, *Let us not forſake the aſſembling our ſelves together, as the manner of ſome is, but exhort one another, and ſo much the more, as ye ſee the Day approaching*; ver. 25. that is, let us not leave the publick Congregations of Chriſt's Church, appointed to celebrate the Praiſes of our Redeemer, to hear his Word, to receive his Holy Sacraments, and jointly to offer up our Prayers and Thankſgivings unto him: To neglect theſe, is a Degree of Apoſtacy and Defection from him, and therefore let us exhort one another to keep to them, and the rather, becauſe the Day of Reckoning is at hand.

This is the Subſtance of this Day's Epiſtle, which affords many pious and excellent Meditations proper for *Good-Friday*; the digeſting whereof will make it a *Good Friday* indeed, even the Cauſe of all our Good, and the Spring of all our Joy: for all Divine Bleſſings flow in to us from the Fountain of Chriſt's Blood, and his Grave is the ſole Foundation of all our Hopes and Expectations. Let us then, with Tears of Sorrow and Repentance, remember our Saviour's Paſſion; ſo ſhall we be the better fitted for the Joys and Triumphs of his Reſurrection, and by keeping the Faſt of *Good-Friday*, be prepar'd for the Feaſt of *Eaſter*: which God grant, *&c.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE LVI.

The GOSPEL for *Good-Friday*.

St. John xix. 1 —— 38.

Pilate *therefore took Jeſus and ſcourg'd him; and the Soldiers platted a Crown of Thorns, and put it on his Head; and they put on him a Purple Robe, and ſaid,* Hail, King of the *Jews! and they ſmote him with their Hands,* &c.

THE Harmony of the Four Evangeliſts is in nothing more plainly ſeen, than in their ſeveral Relations of Chriſt's Paſſion, wherein they all agree in the moſt material Paſſages and Circumſtances of it; and it is therefore made the Subject of this Week's Meditations and Devotion.

The Account that St. *Matthew* gives of it was ſhew'd in the Goſpel for the laſt Sunday: I ſhall briefly paſs over what was there ſpoken to, and conſider only what was omitted there, and added here.

The Goſpel for this Day of his Death, is taken out of St. *John*, rather than out of any of the other Evangeliſts, becauſe (as a Father hath obſerv'd) St. *John* was preſent at the Paſſion, and continu'd at our Saviour's Croſs, ſtanding by it, when the others fled: And therefore the Paſſion being, as it were, repreſented before our eyes this Day, the Church hath order'd his Teſtimony to be read, who ſaw it himſelf, that we may be the better confirm'd in it by an Eye-witneſs of the Truth of it, and learn, by his example, to be neither aſham'd or afraid of the Croſs of Chriſt.

The Goſpel begins with the Part that *Pilate* acted in the Tragedy of Chriſt's Paſſion, who is ſaid, *ver.* 11. *To take Jeſus and ſcourge him*; which he did either to ſatisfy the Importunity of the People, by inflicting a lighter Puniſhment, and thereby ſeeking to releaſe him; as St. *Luke* tells us, *Chap.* 23. 16. or he us'd Scourging as a prelimina-

ry

ry Punishment, that was wont to go before Crucifixion: or else he scourg'd him, as some think, to get the whole Truth out of him, it being customary among the *Romans* to use Rods or Wands for free Persons, and Whips for Slaves to that purpose; and Christ being in the form of a Servant, had this servile Punishment exercis'd upon him.

As for the *Soldiers platting a Crown of Thorns, and setting it on his Head, and putting on him the Purple Robe*, and arraying him in other Formalities of a Mock-King; these things have been already spoken to.

Pilate *therefore went forth to the People, and said unto them, Behold I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him*; meaning, that having scourg'd him, he could find nothing in him, that might deserve or require any farther Punishment; at which words *Jesus came forth, wearing his Crown of Thorns and Purple Robe. Pilate* speaking to the People, said unto them, *Behold the Man, see there he is, what can you alledg against him?* where he invites their Compassion, by an Appeal to his Innocence; intimating, that he had suffer'd enough already for the Crimes they could object against him.

However, *the Chief Priests and other Officers*, without laying any thing to his charge, at the sight of him, *cry'd out, Crucify him, Crucify him.* To whom *Pilate* reply'd, *Take ye him, and crucify him, for I find no fault in him*: that is, for his part he could see no reason for the doing of it, and therefore they must do it themselves, if they would have it done, for he would have no hand in it.

Whereupon the *Jews* fearing that the Favour of *Pilate* might procure his Release, began to charge him home, saying, *We have a Law, and by our Law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God:* the Punishment of Blasphemy being, by their Law, to *be ston'd to death.* Pilate *hearing that Saying, was the more afraid*; partly of the Displeasure of the Emperor, by countenancing a Rival King, and partly of a greater Punishment from God, by condemning an innocent Person. In this strait he bethought himself, and *went again into the Judgment-Hall*, and summoning Jesus before him, saith unto him, *Whence art thou?* that is, tell me truly, from whence is thy Stock and Extraction, that I may the better clear my self and thee? *But Jesus gave him no Answer. Pilate* displeas'd at his Silence, after so much Kindness (as he thought) shew'd unto him, said to him, *Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest*

thou

thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to releaſe thee? Where he asks, why he refus'd to anſwer him, in whoſe power it was either to condemn or to acquit him. Jeſus then broke his Silence, and ſaid unto him, *Thou couldſt have no power at all againſt me, except it were given thee from above, therefore he that deliver'd me unto thee hath the greater Sin:* meaning, that neither he nor any earthly Perſon whatſoever could have any power againſt him, had not his Father in Heaven, out of his infinite Wiſdom and Counſels, delegated and permitted it to him for the Good of Mankind, deſigning by his Sufferings to work out and accompliſh their Salvation. Chriſt wanted not either Right or Power to vindicate and reſcue himſelf from the Malice and Injuſtice of all his Enemies; but he meekly ſubmitted to the Will of his Father in both, to bring about his gracious and glorious Purpoſes. And tho *Pilate*'s Sin might admit of ſome Mitigation, by his endeavouring his Releaſe; yet *Judas*, who betray'd him, and the Chief Prieſts and others that deliver'd him to him, had a more heinous and inexcuſable Guilt.

Pilate, more convinc'd by this Diſcourſe of the Goodneſs and Greatneſs of our Saviour, and that he was not only an innocent but divine Perſon, *from thenceforth ſought to releaſe him:* but the *Jews* perſiſted in their Rage and Importunity againſt him, crying out, and ſaying, *If thou let this Man go, thou art not* Cæſar's *Friend; for whoſoever maketh himſelf a King, ſpeaketh againſt* Cæſar: *ver.* 12. Where they make the releaſing our Saviour, no leſs than Treaſon and Conſpiracy againſt the Emperor; and to be a Friend to Chriſt, was to be an Enemy to *Cæſar*.

When Pilate *therefore heard that Saying*, he began to fear the Diſpleaſure of the Emperor, and that the ſetting him at liberty might endanger his own; and being unwilling to venture his own Life, by ſaving of his, *brought Jeſus forth, and ſat down in the Judgment-Seat, in a Place that is call'd the Pavement, but in the Hebrew* Gabbatha; an open Gallery on high, viſible to all the People: And as he brought him forth before, with an *Ecce Homo! Behold the Man!* to invite their Compaſſion; ſo he here brought him forth again, with an *Ecce Rex veſter! Behold your King!* to demand their Subjection: which was done at the Preparation of the Paſſover about the ſixth Hour (the third, ſaith St. *Mark*) when there was wont to be a more than ordinary Concourſe of the People; to ſee whether they would bear

with

with his Releasement. *But they still cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him.* Pilate *saith unto them, shall I crucify your King?* Have you no more regard to your long-expected Messiah, who was promised to be your King, than to execute him as a Malefactor? *The chief Priests answer'd, We have no King but* Cæsar.

Pilate seeing he could prevail nothing, but that rather a Tumult was made, which he fear'd might tend to his own detriment, *deliver'd him up unto them to be crucify'd*; passing Sentence upon him, to do unto him as they would: and *then they took Jesus and led him away*, the Soldiers seizing and leading him to execution. As they went to the Place, they made him (as they that suffer'd that Punishment were wont) to bear his own Cross upon his Shoulders; till being weary and ready to faint under the Burden, they compell'd one *Simon* a *Cyrenian* to bear it for him. When they came to a Place call'd *Golgotha*, that is to say, the Place of a Skull, from the Repository of Skulls and dead Mens Bones that was there, they proceeded to crucify him, and made the Cross which he bore, to bear him.

And to make his Death the more infamous, he was *crucify'd with two Thieves, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst*; as if he had been the principal Malefactor. By which was fulfill'd that Prophecy of *Isaias*, *He was numbred with the Transgressors, and made his Grave with the Wicked*; Isa. 53. 12.

The Title or Inscription set over his Head, together with the several Languages in which it was written, hath been already spoken to; only St. *John* here farther observes, that the chief Priests of the *Jews* would have it alter'd, from his being King of the *Jews*, to his saying, That he was the King of the *Jews*: But *Pilate* would admit of no Alteration, but would have it stand as it was; saying, *What I have written, I have written.*

The Account here given of the Soldiers parting his Garments, and casting Lots upon his Vesture, is the same with that before mention'd in St. *Matthew*; only St. *John* here adds, that Christ's *Coat was without Seam, woven all of one piece from the top throughout*; ver. 23. to signify (as some have observ'd from it) that Christ's Church is but one, and so to be kept intire and united, without any Rent, Schism, or Division in it: and they that offer to tear it, cease to be of it.

All

All this while ſtood near the Croſs the Bleſſed Virgin, the Mother of our Lord, with a Grief and Concern, no doubt, ſuitable to ſo ſad an Occaſion; and yet with a Silence and Reſignation becoming ſo Holy a Mother, who, with *Abraham*, was ready to offer up her only Son at God's Call and Command, and was content to ſee him made a Sacrifice for the Salvation of Mankind. There were likewiſe with her her two Attendants, *Mary* the Wife of *Cleophas*, Siſter-in-Law to the Holy Virgin; her Husband being Brother, or elſe ſhe Siſter to *Joſeph*; her own Siſter ſhe was not, it being neither uſual or convenient to call two Siſters by the ſame Name: there was alſo preſent *Mary Magdalen*, and *John* the beloved Diſciple, who continu'd with our Saviour to the laſt Hour, when the reſt deſerted him. Here ſhe and they that were with her, ſtood beholding, and hearing with heavy Hearts, what was ſaid and done againſt her Son. Our Lord looking down from the Croſs, ſaw his Mother and the Diſciple whom he loved, ſtanding by her; and ſpeaking firſt to her, call'd her *Woman*, not Mother, leſt ſhe ſhould ſuffer from the Multitude, for her near Relation to him; and then recommended her to the Care and Kindneſs of *John* his beloved Diſciple, as to one that would thenceforward perform to her the Duty and Obſervance of a Son; ſaying to her by way of Conſolation, *Woman, behold thy Son*; that is, ſee one that will ſupply the Place of a Son, and do all the good Offices that belong to that Relation. *And then ſaith he to the Diſciple, Behold thy Mother*; that is, take the ſame care of her as if ſhe were thine own Mother. *And from that hour* John *took her to his own Home*, as Children are wont to do to their aged Parents.

Our Bleſſed Saviour having thus made his Will, and diſpos'd of his only Charge, his dear Mother, to his beloved Diſciple, who took care of her, and ſupply'd her with all Neceſſaries till her Death; he then compos'd himſelf for the laſt Scene of his Sufferings. To which end, *Jeſus knowing that all things were now accompliſh'd*; that is, that all the Prophecies concerning him, that were antecedent to his Death, were punctually fulfill'd, ſave one only mention'd by *David*, Pſal. 69. 22. *They gave me Gall to eat, and when I was thirſty they gave me Vinegar to drink: that this Scripture likewiſe might be fulfilled, he ſaith, I thirſt.* Knowing that his Enemies were ready enough to give him Gall and Vinegar, the moſt bitter and ſoureſt Potion they could; for *there was a Veſſel ſet and prepar'd full of Vinegar* for that purpoſe:

purpose: *and they filled a Sponge with the Vinegar, and put it upon Hyssop, and put it to his Mouth.* Where the Sponge was to bring the Vinegar to his Mouth, and the Hyssop to sprinkle it in his Face, according to the manner us'd to Sufferers in that case.

But *when Jesus had received the Vinegar*, the last Dregs of the bitter Cup prepared for him by his heavenly Father to drink, he utter'd those comfortable words to poor Sinners, saying, *It is finished*: meaning, that all the Predictions relating to his Life, and that were to go before his Death, were fully answer'd; the Sacrifice was offer'd, and the Ransom of Mankind from the Wrath of God and Eternal Death fully paid; and so the Work of Man's Redemption, as to all the Parts and Prophecies of it, exactly compleated.

After which, having no more to do, commending his Soul into the hands of his Heavenly Father, *He bowed his Head, and gave up the Ghost.* Thus ended our Lord's Passion, and thus the bloody Sacrifice was finish'd; by which the Work of our Redemption was accomplish'd, and the Debt due to Divine Justice for our Sins, paid to the utmost Farthing.

After this, the next care was, how to dispose of his Body; to which end, *The* Jews, *because it was the Preparation, that the Bodies should not remain on the Cross on the Sabbath-Day, which was a high Day with them, besought* Pilate *that their Legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.* There was a Law given to the *Jews* by God Almighty, that *if a Man have committed a Sin worthy of Death, and he be to be put to death and hang'd on a Tree, his Body shall not remain all Night upon the Tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that Day; for he that is hanged, is accursed of God: that the Land be not defiled.* Deut. 21. 22, 23. Accordingly they besought *Pilate* for removing the Bodies of those executed Persons, which was not to be done but by the Permission of the *Roman* Magistrate: in which they were the more instant, because the next Day was their Sabbath-day. *Pilate*, at their Request, presently sent an order to the Soldiers to take away the Bodies of the Malefactors; but first *to break their Legs*, lest there should be Life in them, and so being taken down, might make their Escape and run away. The Soldiers finding the two Thieves not dead, *brake their Bones* and took them down; but *coming to Jesus, and seeing that he was dead already*, they spared him, and *brake*

not

not his Legs, *that the Scripture might be fulfilled, ſaying, A Bone of him ſhall not be broken.* This was commanded and punctually obſerv'd in the Paſchal Lamb, *Exod.* 12. 46. *Ye ſhall not break a Bone thereof:* and is apply'd by the Pſalmiſt to our Saviour, the Lamb of God repreſented by it; ſaying, *Pſal.* 34. 20. *A Bone of him ſhall not be broken:* which Prophecy was at this time actually fulfilled.

But tho the Soldiers, by the Divine Diſpoſal, ſpar'd his Bones, yet *one of them* rudely, or wantonly thruſt his Lance or *Spear* into his Fleſh, *and pierced his Side, and forthwith there came out Water and Blood:* not naturally, as Wiſe-Men ſuppoſe, the piercing of a dead Body not affording ſo great a Stream of Blood and Water as then guſh'd out; but miraculouſly and myſteriouſly, to ſignify the waſhing away of our Sins and Pollutions by the Blood of his Croſs. Yea, the Fathers generally make the iſſuing of this Water and Blood out of our Saviour's Side, the Types and Emblems of the two Sacraments; the Water repreſenting Baptiſm, and the Blood the Holy Euchariſt; and both the purging away of our Guilt by the Sacrifice of himſelf, as they were formerly by the Blood of the Altar.

And this piercing his Side by the Soldier's Spear, was for the fulfilling of another Scripture; which ſaith, *They ſhall look upon him whom they pierc'd,* Zech. 12. 10. Accordingly, the Executioners of our Saviour pierc'd indeed his Sacred Body, but did not break a Bone, as the Predictions of the Prophets foretold. St. *John* was a Spectator of all this; for being preſent at the Paſſion, he diligently obſerv'd all that paſs'd, and ſo became an Eye-witneſs to teſtify and record it, for the ſatisfaction of all future Ages. So himſelf tells us, *ver.* 35. *And he that ſaw it bare Record, and his Record is true; and he knoweth that he ſaith true, that ye might believe.*

Thus have we gone through the ſeveral Scenes of that direful Tragedy, that was acted on the Perſon of our Bleſſed Saviour, and ſhew'd the many Ingredients of that bitter Cup, which he took off, for the Health of Mankind. From whence many uſeful Leſſons may be infer'd; I ſhall mention a few of them. As,

Iſt, From the Treachery of *Judas* in betraying, and the Injuſtice of *Pilate* in condemning our Lord, we may learn the great Danger and diſmal Conſequences of ſinning wilfully

fully against the Light and Convictions of our own Conſcience. Both of them acted againſt their own Knowledg; and both felt the bitter Remorſe and ſevere Laſhes of a guilty Mind. *Judas* being a Diſciple, a Companion, and conſtant Attendant upon our Saviour, one that had been taught and ſuſtain'd by him, could not but know the Baſeneſs of betraying ſo good a Maſter; and yet for a few Pieces of Silver ſold him into the hands of his Enemies. *Pilate* alſo, after many publick Declarations of our Saviour's Innocence, after the Warning of his Wife to have nothing to do with that juſt Man, and his frequent owning that he found no fault in him; was yet, by a ſordid Compliance with the *Jews*, induc'd to releaſe an infamous Robber, named *Barrabbas*, and to paſs Sentence againſt Jeſus to be crucify'd. But how did it fare with theſe two bloody Inſtruments of his Death? Why, *Judas*'s Conſcience awaken'd and flew in his face, fill'd him with Horror and Deſpair, and gave him no reſt till he went out and hang'd himſelf. *Pilate* likewiſe, who by a cowardly Fear of *Cæſar* was drawn into this unjuſt and vile Action, was ſoon after remov'd by him, and falling into Contempt, was haraſs'd and buffeted by the *Jews*, with whom he ſo baſely comply'd: which may teach us to beware of offending God, and wounding our own Conſciences by any wilful and deliberate Sin. For *if we ſin wilfully, after we have receiv'd the Knowledg of the Truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sin, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation, which ſhall devour the Adverſaries*: Heb. 10. 26, 27.

2*dly*, From the fulfilling of all the Prophecies in Chriſt, and his finiſhing the Work of our Redemption by the Merits of his Paſſion, we may learn to *hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith in him without wavering*; not to ſtagger thro Unbelief, but to rely upon his all-ſufficient Atonement, and by no means to let go our Faith or Hope in him. We read of ſome in the latter days, that would *deny the Lord that bought them*, drawing many from the Truth, and leading them into pernicious and damnable Errors: 'twere well if there were none of theſe in our days. But alas! Chriſt crucify'd is ſtill a Stumbling-block to ſome, and a Laughing-ſtock to others; of whom therefore let us beware, as the Enemies of the Croſs of Chriſt, who glory in their Shame, whoſe End is Deſtruction, and who will be the Ruin of all that are miſled and deluded by them.

3*dly*, The Doctrine of Christ crucify'd should teach us to *crucify the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts*; to be dead to all the Allurements of sinful Pleasures, and with St. *Paul* to be crucify'd unto the World, and the World unto us.

Lastly, From Christ's Sufferings, let us learn patiently to bear whatever may befal us in his Cause; knowing, that if we suffer with him, we shall also be glorify'd together: which God grant, *&c.*

DISCOURSE LVII.

The EPISTLE for *Easter-Eve.*

1 Pet. iii. 17, to the end.

It is better, if the Will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing: For Christ also hath once suffer'd for Sins, the Just for the Unjust, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the Flesh, but quicken'd by the Spirit, &c.

AFTER the Death and Passion of our Blessed Saviour, the Subject of this Holy Week's Meditations; the Church by an Evening-Service prepares us for his Resurrection. To which end, the Collect for the Day puts us in mind of our conforming to Christ's Death, by being baptiz'd into it; and likewise of our conforming to his Burial, by mortifying our corrupt Affections: of both which the Apostle speaks, *Rom.* 6. 3, 4, 5. From whence we are taught to pray, that we may pass thro the Grave or Gate of Death to a joyful Resurrection, for the Merits of Christ, who died, and was bury'd, and rose again for us.

Now our conforming to Christ's Death, is not only by dying unto Sin, but by partaking something of the Sufferings that are due to it. And because Men are more impatient, and apt to complain of unjust and undeserv'd Sufferings, than of any deserv'd Evils, which they justly bring upon themselves by their own faults; therefore the Epistle

for

for the Day is made uſe of, to ſet us right in this matter, and to comfort us under the moſt extreme and unjuſt Sufferings: ſaying in the beginning,

That *'tis better, if the Will of God be ſo, that ye ſuffer for well-doing than for evil-doing.* Since it pleaſes God, that we muſt all bear a ſhare in the Sufferings of this Life, it is far more deſirable and profitable for us to ſuffer as innocent than as guilty Perſons, for doing well than for ill doing; there being much more of Comfort, and leſs of Danger in the one than the other. If a Man ſuffer innocently without cauſe, or for Righteouſneſs ſake in a good Cauſe, there is no matter of Sorrow in that; for his own Conſcience will acquit him of the Guilt, and God will reward him for the trouble he may undergo in it: ſo that he may rather rejoice than repine at ſuch Afflictions, which are but light and momentary, in compariſon of that exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory they work out for us, and bring us to. But there is neither Comfort nor Reward in juſt and deſerved Puniſhments, for there Conſcience condemns; and God, who is greater than our Heart, and knoweth all things, will condemn alſo. So that ſuch Sufferings are but the Beginning of Sorrows, and lead to far greater and more laſting Puniſhments. *What glory is it,* ſaith St. *Peter, if when ye are buffeted for your Faults ye ſhall take it patiently? But if when ye do well and ſuffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.* 1 Pet. 2. 20. 'Tis not the Manner or Meaſure, but the Cauſe of our Sufferings, that can give us any Comfort in them, or intitle us to the Reward of Martyrdom. If you ſuffer for doing your Duty and obeying the Will of God, you may reſt aſſur'd, that he will ſtand by and ſupport you, and amply recompenſe your Patience under it. But if you are juſtly puniſh'd for the Violation and Tranſgreſſion of his Laws, you will find no Succour, but be left to ſink under the ſad effects of your own Guilt and Folly: *This is thank-worthy* (ſaith the ſame Apoſtle) *if a Man for Conſcience towards God endure Grief, ſuffering wrongfully:* implying, that no Thanks or Reward is due, where the Puniſhments are juſt, or legally inflicted for the Demerit of their Crimes. Which made him ask the Queſtion, *Who is he that will harm you, if you are Followers of that which is good? But if ye ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their Terror, neither be troubled* at ſuch Trials. And therefore the Apoſtle gives this good Caution to all Chriſtians, *Chap.* 4. 15, &c. *Let*

none of you ſuffer as a Murderer, or as a Thief, or as an Evil-doer, or as a Buſy-body in other Mens matters; yet if any Man ſuffer as a Chriſtian, let him not be aſhamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf. St. *Paul* was ſo far from being aſham'd, that he glory'd in the Croſs; and the Apoſtles rejoic'd, that they were counted worthy to ſuffer for the Name of Chriſt. St. *James* bids us count it all Joy, when we fall into divers Temptations; knowing, if they are borne with Patience and Perſeverance in well-doing, they will tend to our greater Good, and yield the peaceable Fruits of Righteouſneſs to them that are exercis'd therewith.

All which may abundantly confirm the Truth of what is here told us, that *'tis better to ſuffer for well-doing than for evil-doing:* the one being attended with the Teſtimony of a good Conſcience here, and with a much greater Reward hereafter in Heaven; the other drawing on all the Miſeries both of this Life and the next. And therefore to encourage us in this Patience and Perſeverance in well-doing,

The Apoſtle, in the next words, adds a good Reaſon or Motive thereunto, taken from the Example of Chriſt himſelf; *For Chriſt alſo hath once ſuffer'd for Sins, the Juſt for the Unjuſt, that he might bring us unto God:* meaning, that Chriſt hath left us a Pattern of Patience under unjuſt Sufferings; for tho he had no Sin, neither was any Guile found in his mouth, yea, tho he was Innocence it ſelf, and a Lamb without blemiſh and without ſpot, yet was he barbarouſly treated as a Malefactor, and bore the Sins of many; the Puniſhment whereof he underwent with an invincible Patience, and Reſignation of himſelf unto God. *He was brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter* (ſaith the Prophet) *and as the Sheep before the Shearer is dumb, ſo he open'd not his Mouth. When he was reviled* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *he reviled not again; when he ſuffered, he threatned not, but committed himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly:* bearing our Sins in his own Body on the Tree, that we being dead unto Sin, ſhould live unto Righteouſneſs, by whoſe Stripes we are heal'd. Thus *the Juſt ſuffer'd for the Unjuſt, that he might bring us to God:* that is, reconcile us to him, who were Enemies to him by wicked Works, and to give us an Entrance into his glorious Preſence; thereby bringing us nigh by the Blood of his Croſs, who were before afar off and alienated from him: which happy Effect ſhould reconcile us to Sufferings, by which alone this great Work was accompliſh'd.

This

This is the Deſign of this Day's Epiſtle, to make us conformable to Chriſt, as well in his Sufferings as in his Glory: *For hereunto were ye call'd* (ſaith our Apoſtle), *becauſe Chriſt alſo ſuffer'd for us; leaving us an Example, that we ſhould follow his ſteps.* To this he hath call'd us both by his Precept and his Pattern, and hath gone every ſtep of our way before us; which we are therefore chearfully to follow without Murmuring or Impatience: he having taſted and felt the Bitterneſs of God's Wrath for our Sins, we may not grudg to taſte of that bitter Cup, which he hath taken off to the very dregs; and having borne the Heat and Burden of the Day for us, let us not droop or faint under a few eaſy and gentle Afflictions.

But to encourage us to this Conformity with Chriſt in his Death, the Apoſtle tells us in the next words, that that Body of his that thus died for us, was rais'd again by the Divine Power; *Being put to death in the Fleſh, he was quicken'd by the Spirit.* And we being planted together in the Likeneſs of his Death, ſhall be alſo in the Likeneſs of his Reſurrection; being predeſtinated to be conform'd to the Image of his Son, that he may be the firſt-born among many Brethren, *Rom.* 8. 29. Now this Reſurrection of Chriſt was effected by the Virtue of his Divine Nature, call'd here *the Spirit*; according to that of St. *Paul*, Rom. 1. 4. *He was declar'd to be the Son of God with Power, according to the Spirit of Holineſs, by the Reſurrection from the Dead*; ſaid therefore to be *juſtify'd by the Spirit*, 1 Tim. 3. 16. By this Spirit he is farther ſaid,

To preach to the Spirits in Priſon, which were ſometime diſobedient, when the Long-ſuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, *while the Ark was preparing, wherein few, that is, eight Souls, were ſaved by Water.* This difficult and obſcure Text hath exercis'd the Wits and Pens of many, who have given divers and ſundry Interpretations of it, with which I ſhall not trouble you, taking the true Senſe and Meaning of it to be plainly this: That Chriſt, who in the Fulneſs of Time was manifeſt in the Fleſh, appear'd long before by his Holy Spirit, even in the time of the Old World, when he inſpir'd *Noah* the Preacher of Righteouſneſs, to warn and call them to Repentance, to prevent the Ruin that would otherwiſe come upon them; his Spirit ſtriving with the Men of thoſe times, whoſe Souls are now in the infernal Regions, as it were impriſon'd and reſerv'd there to the Judgment of the great Day, for being diſobedient

and deaf to all Calls to Amendment, and wilfully perſiſting in their Wickedneſs againſt all Warnings and Admonitions to the contrary. In a word, when they had abus'd his Patience and Goodneſs, which had a long time waited for them, while the Ark was preparing, he then reſolv'd that his Spirit ſhould no longer ſtrive with them; and ſo ſwept them all away with a Flood, ſave *Noah* and his Family, who were preſerv'd in the Ark from the general Deluge that drown'd and overwhelm'd all the reſt, as we read in the Book of *Geneſis*, and in 2 *Pet.* 2. 4, 5. This was Chriſt's Preaching by his Spirit to the Spirits in Priſon, and this is here alledg'd as an Example, how much better it is to ſuffer for well-doing than for evil-doing; the old World being drown'd for their Wickedneſs, and *Noah* with his Family ſav'd for his Righteouſneſs from periſhing by Water.

Which Deliverance of *Noah* from the general Deluge, is here made a Type of our Salvation in the Ark of the Church by the Waters of Baptiſm; ſo the next words tell us, *The like Figure whereunto, even Baptiſm, doth alſo now ſave us, not by the putting away the Filth of the Fleſh, but the Anſwer of a good Conſcience towards God, by the Reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt*: that is, as Water bore up the Ark wherein *Noah* and his Family were ſav'd from periſhing by it; ſo the Waters of Baptiſm now preſerve us in the Ark of Chriſt's Church from ſinking into the Gulph of Perdition. But yet,

The Efficacy of this Sacrament of Baptiſm proceeds not from any outward cleanſing of the Fleſh, or the waſhing away the Pollution of the Body, but from the inward cleanſing of the Soul, and waſhing that from all Impurity; 'tis by the *Laver of Regeneration and the Renewing of the Holy Ghoſt*, by which the Conſcience is purify'd from Guilt, and can anſwer for us before God. Which things are ſaid to be accompliſh'd for us *by the Reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt*; meaning, that the Efficacy of this Sacrament is confirm'd and aſſur'd to us by our Lord's riſing again from the Dead: for as *he died for our Sins, ſo he roſe again for our Juſtification.* He as our Surety was made a Priſoner in the Grave for our Debts, and could not be releas'd from thence without making full Satisfaction. Now his Reſurrection from the Dead is a plain Evidence, that our Debt is paid, and the Sins for which he died were fully expiated. His Releaſe is a Token of our Diſcharge; which made the Apoſtle boldly ſay, *Who ſhall lay any thing to the Charge of God's Elect? it*

is

is Chriſt that died, yea rather that is riſen again, Rom. 8. And St. *Peter* tells us, *that we are begotten again in Baptiſm unto a lively Hope, by the Reſurrection of Chriſt from the Dead.* The Mercies of our Salvation depend upon the Merits of his Death, and are deriv'd upon us by the Virtue of his Reſurrection; they were purchas'd by the one, and apply'd to us by the other: and from both we have a firm Foundation for our Faith in him, *who died, and was buried, and roſe again for us.*

To which the Apoſtle adds the farther Steps and Degrees of his Exaltation, as the Grounds of our greater Confidence in him, *who is gone into Heaven, and is on the right hand of God; Angels, and Authorities, and Powers being made ſubject to him*: meaning, that Chriſt by his aſcending up into Heaven, and ſitting at the Right Hand of God, hath obtain'd a compleat Victory over his and our Enemies, and made all his Foes his Footſtool. He hath all Power given him both in Heaven and Earth, by which all the Orders of Angels, diſtinguiſh'd here by *Authorities and Powers*, and elſewhere by *Thrones and Dominions*, are all put in Subjection to him.

Thus I have briefly given you the Senſe and Subſtance of this Day's Epiſtle; from which we may learn,

1. To confirm our Minds in the Truth of Chriſt's Death. The Death and Reſurrection of our Saviour are the two main Props and Pillars of the Chriſtian Faith, and therefore we are to be eſtabliſh'd and firmly built up in the Belief of them; for if Chriſt had not died and riſen again, we are yet in our Sins; neither is the Body quicken'd except it die: ſo that we muſt be ſtedfaſt in the Faith of both, if we expect to receive the Benefit of either. 'Tis from his Death that we muſt look for eternal Life; and his riſing from the Grave, is the ſole Foundation of all our Hopes and Expectations.

2. We may learn from this Diſcourſe to conform to his Death by dying unto Sin, and to his Reſurrection by riſing again to Newneſs of Life. Theſe are the declared Ends of both, and the Uſe the Apoſtle would have us to make of them: for the Deſign of his Death was to mortify our corrupt Affections, and the End of his Reſurrection to quicken us to a Life of Righteouſneſs; as we ſhall ſhew more at large hereafter.

3. From this Discourse we may learn Patience under the greatest Sufferings in a good Cause, and Perseverance in well-doing, notwithstanding any Difficulties we may meet with in it: for *blessed are they, that are persecuted for Righteousness sake; for great is their Reward in Heaven.* We may not indeed run rashly into Temptation, nor draw unnecessary Troubles and Sufferings upon us by our own Imprudence and Folly; for Christ hath willed us to be wise as Serpents, to foresee and prevent Evils, and to flee from one place to another to avoid Persecution: but still he bids us to be harmless as Doves, to preserve our Integrity at all times and in all cases, and to decline no Sufferings to keep a good Conscience. These things Christ hath taught us both by his Precept and Example, and encourag'd us with the Promise of an ample Recompence for any thing we lose or suffer in his Cause. And being made conformable to him in the Likeness of his Death, we shall be also in the Likeness of his Resurrection: which God grant, *&c.*

DISCOURSE LVIII.

The GOSPEL for *Easter-Eve.*

St. Matthew xxvii. 57, to the end.

When the Even was come, there came a rich Man of Arimathea, *named* Joseph, *who also himself was Jesus's Disciple; he went to* Pilate, *and begged the Body of Jesus. Then* Pilate *commanded the Body to be deliver'd; and when* Joseph *had taken the Body, he wrapped it in a clean Linen Cloth, and laid it in his own Tomb,* &c.

THE Epistle for this Day minded us of Christ's Death, and our Conformity thereunto, by dying unto Sin, represented to us in the Sacrament of Baptism; of which before.

The Gospel for the Day gives us a Relation of his Burial, with the Circumstances that attended it: of which I am

now

now to speak. After Death follows Burial, and both go before a Resurrection: for as the Body is not quicken'd, except it die, and the Seed must be buried in the Earth before it can rise again; so must we be dead and bury'd with Christ, before we can be rais'd with him. The Relation of his Burial begins thus; *When the Even was come*: that shews us the time of this great Action, which was in the Evening of the Day of his Crucifixion; when the dead Body had remain'd all the Day upon the Cross, then towards the Even they thought of taking it down and burying it. To which end, one *Joseph* of *Arimathea* took upon him the Care of his Interment. He was a Person of Quality, and of no small Interest in his Country; describ'd here,

1st, By the Place of his Birth, which was *Arimathea*, a City of the *Jews*, the Place where the Prophet *Samuel* was born and brought up; called by the *Hebrews Ramatheim*, by the *Greeks* Ἁρμαθαΐμ: by which he is distinguish'd from *Joseph* the reputed Father of our Saviour.

2dly, He is describ'd by his Wealth and Substance, called here *a rich Man of* Arimathea; which gives him a Figure and Reputation in the World.

3dly, He is describ'd elsewhere by his Profession and honourable Station in his Country, for St. *Mark* stiles him *an honourable Counsellor*, Mark 15. 43. meaning, that he was a Member of the *Sanhedrim*, or great Council at *Jerusalem*, which consisted of Persons of the greatest note, both for Wealth and Wisdom among the *Jews*.

Again, *4thly*, St. *Luke* gives him the Character of *a good Man and a just*, famed for his Integrity, and *one that consented not to the Counsel and Deeds of them that persecuted and crucify'd our Saviour*, Luke 18. 50, 51.

Lastly, He is said to be *himself one of Jesus's Disciples, and one that waited for the Kingdom of God*; though (as St. *John* tells us) he carried it *secretly for fear of the* Jews, *John* 19. 38.

This great and honourable Person, who by his Quality and Station had an easy access to *Pilate*, came to him and *begg'd the Body of Jesus*; St. *Mark* expresses it, that *he went boldly unto* Pilate, *and craved the Body of Jesus*: However that be, *Pilate* denied him not, but commanded the Body to be deliver'd. The Design of *Joseph* herein, was to pay a due respect to the Body of our Lord, to rescue it from the contemptuous Usage of common Malefactors, and to give it a decent Burial.

Accordingly,

Accordingly, *When* Joſeph *had taken the Body, he wrapp'd it in a clean Linen Cloth*, ſuch as they us'd to wrap up dead Bodies in, and perform'd all the uſual Solemnities to it upon that occaſion. Moreover,

Nicodemus, another great Perſon, and one that had convers'd much with our Saviour by Night, and was likewiſe one of his Diſciples, tho he would not openly ſhew it for fear of the *Jews*, and probably one of *Joſeph*'s familiar Acquaintance, upon the account of their Diſcipleſhip; he, I ſay, join'd with him in this Service, and brought a great quantity of Spices (St. *John* reckons it to a hundred pound weight) to embalm the Body, thinking, as the Cuſtom then was, thereby to preſerve it from Corruption. When they had perform'd theſe and other uſual Ceremonies to his dead Body, by waſhing, anointing, and embalming it with Spices, wrapping it in fine Linen, and binding his Face about with a Napkin, *Joſeph laid it in his own Tomb, which he had hewn out in a Rock; and he roll'd a great Stone to the Door of the Sepulchre, and departed.* This was a new Tomb, deſcrib'd by St. *Luke* to be ſuch a one, as *wherein never Man before had laid*; it was with great Care and Coſt hewn out of a Rock by *Joſeph*, and deſign'd by him as a Burying-Place for himſelf and Family. Indeed the Fathers, both in antient and latter times, have been very careful and curious in burying their Dead, and eſpecially in preparing Places and Tombs for that purpoſe. It hath been the Deſire of many *to ſleep with their Fathers*, to lie among thoſe of their own Family, and to have their Bones and Relicks depoſited with their own Kindred: it hath been ever reckon'd a great Puniſhment to be depriv'd of Chriſtian Burial, and a great Misfortune to lie at a diſtance from our own Relations; and therefore ſome have been at no ſmall Expence in purchaſing Ground, that they may lie together. We read of *Abraham*'s buying a Field of the Children of *Heth* for this purpoſe, *Gen.* 23. and many have purchas'd Ground for convenient Repoſitories for themſelves, and thoſe that belong to them, and have appropriated Sepulchres for their Perſons and Families: So did *Joſeph* here, who hew'd out a Tomb in a Rock, that it might be the more durable; and to ſhew his Reſpects to our Saviour, depoſited his Body there, where he deſign'd to lay his own; and to make it the more firm and ſafe, *roll'd a great Stone to the Door of the Sepulchre.*

Thus,

Thus was the Body of our Lord honourably entomb'd, and his Remains decently inter'd, with all the solemn Rites of Burial. To this some have apply'd that Prophecy of *Isaiah, chap.* 11. 10. where 'tis said, that *his Rest should be glorious*; understanding thereby, that his Sepulchre, or Resting-Place, should be attended with Honour and Glory, as it was by those two honourable Persons that took the Care and Management of it: which things were observ'd, and with great Joy and Thankfulness remark'd by *Mary Magdalen, and the other* Mary, *sitting over against the Sepulchre*, who no doubt approv'd and assisted in all the good Offices done to his sacred Body.

Herein also were fulfil'd two other Prophecies mention'd by *Isaiah*: the one, that he *was to be number'd among the Transgressors*, which was fulfil'd, in his being *crucify'd between two Thieves*, as if he had been the Arch-Malefactor; the other, that he was *to make his Grave with the Rich in his Death*, which was fulfil'd, in his being bury'd in the Tomb of *Joseph* of *Arimathea*, a rich and honourable Counsellor: both which Prophecies are extant in *Isa.* 53. 9, 12. and were both accomplish'd in the Person of Christ; which may abundantly confirm our Faith in him.

But how came our Saviour to have the Favour of a Burial, when they, who suffer'd on the curs'd Tree, were not wont to be admitted to it, but were, by the *Roman* Laws, to have their Bodies remain on the Cross, till they were either devour'd by the Fowls of the Air, or consum'd by the Injuries of the Wind or Weather? Why, this was obtain'd partly by the Intercession of a Great Man, whose Interest in the *Roman* Governor prevail'd with him for the taking down and interring his Body, and partly by the Request of the *Jews*, whose Laws requir'd that they who were *put to death by hanging on a Tree, should not remain all Night upon the Tree, but should in any wise be taken down and bury'd the same day*: Deut. 21. 22. By which means they who clamour'd for his Death, did likewise petition for his Burial; as we read, *John* 19. 31.

Thus the Divine Providence, by its infinite Wisdom, order'd all things for the Completion of the Prophecies, and the accomplishing the Work of Man's Redemption. And now the Body of our Lord, after a solemn and sumptuous Funeral, was at rest; but the Consciences of his Enemies and Accusers were not so: for they were fill'd with Fears and Jealousies of his rising again, and doubted what

what the end of these things would be. The *Jews* and the *Romans* both concur'd in his Death, and consented to his Burial; and both conspir'd by all possible means to prevent and hinder his Resurrection: for the next words tell us, that *the Day following the Day of the Preparation* (that is, the Sabbath-Day, the Day before it being call'd the Day of the Preparation, which was probably the Evening of the Friday on which he suffer'd about that time) *The Chief Priests and Pharisees came together unto* Pilate, *saying, Sir, we remember that that Deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three Days I will rise again.* Where, in their Consult with *Pilate*, they stick not to call our Saviour *a Deceiver*, tho both his Doctrine and Miracles plainly prov'd him the true Messias, and that he was a Teacher come from God, and was no otherwise a Deceiver, than in deceiving them of their vain Expectations of Pomp and Preferment from him, who came upon wiser and better Errands: upon which account St. *Paul* afterward stil'd his Disciples *Deceivers, and yet true*; 2 Cor. 6. 8. But their main Business was to let *Pilate* know, that this Deceiver (as they call'd him) said, that *after three Days he would rise again.* This indeed he had often told them, as he well enough might, and had they understood the Prophecies, might easily believe: for when they ask'd of him a Sign more than once, he alledg'd to them that of *Jonas*, Mat. 12. 38. & 16. 4. saying to them, that as *Jonas was three Days and three Nights in the Whale's Belly, so should the Son of Man be three Days in the Heart of the Earth, and then be yielded up again.*

Moreover, he bid them once and again to *destroy this Temple*, meaning *the Temple of his Body, and in three Days he would raise it up again.* These, and many like Expressions of his, coming to their Minds, they address again unto *Pilate*, to *command that the Sepulchre be made sure until the third Day, lest his Disciples come by Night, and steal him away, and say unto the People, He is risen from the Dead; so the last Error shall be worse than the first.* They had, it seems, some Doubts and Fears of the Truth of what he had told them, and suspected the Event of his Predictions; they remembred what he had said, of their *shortly seeing him sitting on the right Hand of Power*; they saw what great Respects were shown to his dead Body by two eminent Persons, which they conceiv'd were grounded upon those Hopes, and perform'd upon some such Expectations:

and

and therefore they renew their Request to *Pilate*, to make all things sure, by setting a Watch about the Sepulchre till the third Day, to prevent the taking or carrying away the Body by Night, and thereby imposing upon the World with a Pretence of his Resurrection; which may prove a more fatal and dangerous Error than we at present apprehend.

To this their earnest and importunate Suit, *Pilate* answer'd and said unto them, *Ye have a Watch, go your way, make it as sure as you can.* They had a Guard of *Roman* Soldiers to stand Centinel at the Grave, to secure the Body from any false play that might be us'd about it. The Governor finding them possess'd with great Fears and Jealousies in this Affair, gave them sufficient Strength to hinder the taking or carrying away the Body, leaving the Matter wholly to their own ordering, and willing them to make all things as secure as they could: whereupon they went immediately to the Grave, and *made the Sepulchre sure, sealing the Stone, and setting a Watch.* To make all things safe, they *rolled a great Stone at the Door of the Sepulchre*, which some of the Antients tell us was fasten'd with Iron, and likewise had a Seal upon it, that they might discern if it were open'd; for the taking away of the Body must make a Breach in the Seal, and so the Theft would be discover'd: And, lastly, to keep all safe, a Guard of Soldiers was appointed to watch both the Stone and Sepulchre.

This is the Sum of this Day's Gospel, which gives us an Account of our Saviour's Burial, as a Preparation to his Resurrection; which, notwithstanding all this care to prevent it, came to pass soon after, according to the time he had appointed: yea, all the Diligence they us'd to hide and hinder this Matter, was, by the Divine Providence, turn'd to Ends quite contrary to their Intentions; and instead of preventing, became the strongest Proof of his Resurrection, of which this very Guard were the first Witnesses: for when the Angel had roll'd away the Stone from the Sepulchre, and declar'd his Resurrection to the Women, shewing them the empty Sepulchre, or the *Place where the Lord lay*; as they were going into the City to acquaint his Disciples, *Behold, some of the Watch came into the City, and shew'd unto the Chief Priests all the things that were done*; tho they corrupted them with a large Sum of Mony,

Mony, bribing them to ſay, *His Diſciples came by Night, and ſtole him away, while they ſlept:* which Corruption or Bribery of the Soldiers, is a thing known and reported among the *Jews* until this Day, as we read at large in the next Chapter. Now,

1. From this Diſcourſe of Chriſt's Burial, we may learn the Certainty of his Death, and the Truth of his Reſurrection: for Men are not wont to bury any before they are dead, nor may any be ſaid to riſe again, unleſs they be bury'd. *Pilate* therefore ſtrictly enquir'd into the Death of our Saviour, and *how long he had been dead*, before he would conſent to the Delivery of his Body to be bury'd: And the Band of Soldiers, that ſtood Centinel at his Grave, affirming to the Chief Prieſts and Elders, that his Body was gone they knew not how, plainly ſhew'd him to be riſen again; the great care they took in ſecuring the Sepulchre, adding much to the Truth of their Teſtimony. The Story of the Diſciples ſtealing away the Body by Night, while they ſlept, having not the leaſt Colour or Foundation of Truth, ſince the Diſciples themſelves neither knew nor believ'd that he was alive, till he actually appear'd to them; after which they became the Witneſſes of it every where.

2. The Solemnities us'd about the Burial of our Saviour's Body, may teach us all due Care for the decent Interment of the Dead. This hath been obſerv'd by Men of all Nations, in all Times and Places; and is continu'd with all decent Rites and Ceremonies to this Day.

Laſtly, Let us conform to Chriſt's Burial, by being *bury'd with him in Baptiſm, that the Body of Sin may be deſtroy'd.* This Uſe the Apoſtle makes of it; *Rom.* 6. 4. *Therefore we are bury'd with him by Baptiſm into Death, that like as Chriſt was rais'd up from the Dead by the Glory of the Father, even ſo we alſo ſhould walk before him in Newneſs of Life.* And being thus dead and bury'd with him, we ſhall, e'er long, riſe with him to a Life immortal: which God grant, for the Merits of him who liv'd and dy'd, and was bury'd, and roſe again for us. *Amen.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE LIX.

Eaſter-Day.

1 Cor. v. part of the 7th and 8th Ver.

Chriſt our Paſſover is ſacrific'd for us: Therefore let us keep the Feaſt, not with the old Leven, neither with the Leven of Malice and Wickedneſs, but with the unleven'd Bread of Sincerity and Truth.

THESE words begin the Service appointed for this great Feſtival of *Eaſter*, wherein we commemorate the Death and Reſurrection of our Bleſſed Saviour, the two great Props and Pillars of the Chriſtian Faith, and the Foundation of all our Hopes and Expectations: for if Chriſt had not dy'd, we had been ſtill dead in our Sins; and if he had not riſen to Life again, we could have had no Hope of another and better Life; but now by both theſe he hath deſtroy'd Death, and intitled us to Life everlaſting.

In memory of which great things, a Holy Feaſt is appointed by Chriſt himſelf, which we are here call'd upon to celebrate, ſaying, *Chriſt our Paſſover is ſacrific'd for us, therefore let us keep the Feaſt, not with the old Leven*, &c. In which words we may obſerve,

Firſt, Something affirm'd, *viz. That Chriſt our Paſſover is ſacrific'd for us.* And,

Secondly, Something infer'd from it, *Therefore let us keep the Feaſt.*

Thirdly, The right way and manner of keeping it, expreſs'd, (1.) Negatively, *Not with the old Leven, nor with the Leven of Malice and Wickedneſs.* And, (2.) Poſitively, *But with the unleven'd Bread of Sincerity and Truth.* Of each of theſe particularly, as the occaſion of the Feſtival requires. And,

Firſt,

First, Of the great thing here affirm'd, and that is, *That Chriſt our Paſſover is ſacrific'd for us.* Where two things will be neceſſary to be ſpoken to:

1ſt, In what ſenſe Chriſt is ſaid to be *our Paſſover.* And,

2ly, How he is ſaid to be *ſacrific'd for us.* For the

1ſt, We read in Scripture of a twofold Paſſover: the one under the Law, call'd the *Jewiſh* Paſſover; the other under the Goſpel, call'd the Chriſtian Paſſover: the former being a Type or myſtical Repreſentation of the latter.

The *Jewiſh* Paſſover was a Lamb ſlain, and eaten in memory of God's paſſing over the Houſes of the *Iſraelites*, when he ſlew all the Firſt-born of the *Egyptians.* Of this we read *Exod.* 12. throughout the Chapter, where we find God Almighty declaring, that he would paſs that Night through the Land of *Egypt*, and would ſmite all the Firſt-born, both of Man and Beaſt, with the Peſtilence, and would ſprinkle their Blood as a Token, upon the Houſes where the *Iſraelites* were; and when he ſaw the Blood, he would paſs over their Houſes, and not deſtroy them with the Plague, with which he would ſmite all the Land of *Egypt.* Now God's cauſing the deſtroying Angel to paſs over the Houſes of the *Iſraelites*, and to ſpare them when he deſtroy'd all the Firſt-born of the *Egyptians*, is what is ſaid to be the *Jewiſh* Paſſover, call'd in that Chapter, *The Lord's Paſſover*, ver. 11. In which there was likewiſe a paſſing over or out of the Land of *Egypt*, that Houſe of Miſery and Bondage, into *Canaan* the Land of Promiſe; and that too by the *Iſraelites* paſſing over the *Red Sea*, which *Pharaoh* and his Hoſt attempting to do, were all overwhelm'd in the Waters; the former paſs'd it over well, when the latter periſh'd in it: Which things are attributed to the Faith of *Moſes* and the *Iſraelites*, *Heb.* 11. where we read, that *thro Faith* Moſes *kept the Paſſover, and the ſprinkling of Blood, leſt he that deſtroy'd the Firſt-born ſhould touch them:* And *by Faith the* Iſraelites *paſs'd thorow the* Red-Sea, *as by dry Land, which the* Egyptians *eſſaying to do, were all drown'd:* ver. 28, 29. This is briefly the *Jewiſh* Paſſover, which was kept by killing and eating the Paſchal Lamb, mention'd in *Exod.* 12.

The Chriſtian Paſſover, of which the former was but a Type, is Chriſt's cauſing the Deſtroyer to paſs over his People, and by ſprinkling them with his Blood, freeing them from the Plague and Puniſhment of Sin, which the

Wicked

Wicked are suffer'd to groan and perish under. For which reason Christ is stil'd in the Text, *Our Passover*; he being the very Paschal Lamb usher'd in by St. *John*, with this saying, *Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the Sins of the World.* In a word, Christ is the Substance of what the *Jewish* Passover was but a Shadow, having made the Wrath of God to pass over us, and perform'd all that which the legal Sacraments and Ceremonies did but typify and represent: For *the Law was but a Shadow of good things to come, but the Substance was Christ, who hath wrought out Eternal Redemption for us.* *Egypt* was a Type of this World, and *Canaan* of Heaven, the true Land of Promise: and the *Israelites* passing out of *Egypt* into the Land of *Canaan*, represented our passing over this Vale of Misery and Trouble into Heaven, the Place of endless Rest and Happiness. Moreover, the *Red Sea* was a Type of Death, which swallows up Mankind, as it were, in a Sea of Blood; all must pass it, some pass it well, but the most part perish in it. Now

Christ's giving us a safe Passage from Death to Life, from the Plague and Punishment of Sin to the Merits and Purchase of his Blood, is what is commonly stil'd the Christian Passover. And Christ being the Author of this Salvation, by opening our Passage to it by his Death and Resurrection, is justly said to be *our Passover*. But,

2*dly*, How is he said to *be sacrificed for us?* Why, Sacrifice we know is the offering up or doing something in the stead, and by way of Satisfaction for another. Thus in the Legal Sacrifices, which were but so many Types and Shadows of the great Atonement, to be after made by our Saviour, there was a killing of Beasts, or offering up of something in the room of the Offender; the Death and Punishment whereof was, in order to the Release of the offending Party.

But because the Blood of Bulls and Goats had not value enough in it, to satisfy for the Sins of Mankind; therefore Christ, the Son of God, as our Surety, put himself in the room of sinful Flesh, and his Death and Sufferings by the Dignity of his Person, and the invaluable Price of his Blood, was a sufficient Compensation for the Sins of the whole World; and as such, is accepted in the behalf of all penitent Christians, as a Release from the Obligation to eternal Punishments due to them. So St. *Matthew* tells us, *He gave his Life a Ransom for many*, Chap. 20. 28. He gave his Life in exchange for ours, and made the laying

down of his in our ſtead, the Price of our Redemption. To the ſame purpoſe ſpeaks St. *Paul*, *Tit.* 2. 14. *He gave himſelf to redeem us from all Iniquity*; that is, from the Power and Puniſhment of it. And the Author to the *Hebrews* tells us, that *he died for the Redemption of Tranſgreſſions*, and to procure for *us the Promiſe of Eternal Life*, Chap. 9. 15. Thus having made his Soul an Offering for Sin, and laid down his Life to ſave ours, he is truly ſaid to *be ſacrificed for us.* And tho the Legal Sacrifices, by reaſon of their Imperfection, were to be often renewed and reiterated every Year; yet Chriſt, by one Oblation of himſelf once offer'd, hath made a full, perfect, and all-ſufficient Sacrifice and Satisfaction for the Sins of Mankind: ſo that there needs *no more offering for Sin*, having by one meritorious Sacrifice and Oblation of himſelf, *perfected for ever them that are ſanctified*; as we read, *Heb.* 9. 26. and *Chap.* 10. By which we ſee the Truth of what is here affirm'd, that *Chriſt our Paſſover is ſacrificed for us.* From whence,

Secondly, I proceed, in the next place, to what is infer'd from it, in theſe words; *Therefore let us keep the Feaſt.* Feaſts and Feſtival Solemnities have been ever thought the moſt proper way of celebrating any memorable Mercies and Deliverances, as the Hiſtories of all Times and Countries may inform us.

But what is the Feaſt here refer'd to, which we are call'd upon to keep? In anſwer to that we muſt note, that there was a Feaſt appointed under the Law, to celebrate the *Jewiſh* Paſſover: and there is likewiſe a Feaſt appointed under the Goſpel, to celebrate the Chriſtian Paſſover. For the

1ſt, We find a Feaſt ordain'd by God himſelf, in memory of the *Jewiſh* Paſſover, *Exod.* 12. 14. where ſpeaking of the deſtroying Angel's paſſing over the Houſes of the *Iſraelites*, he ſaith, *This Day ſhall be to you a Memorial, and you ſhall keep it a Feaſt unto the Lord throughout your Generations; you ſhall keep it a Feaſt by an Ordinance for ever.* At this Feaſt every one was to come and offer *a Lamb*, and the Lamb to be *without Blemiſh or Spot, and a Male of the firſt Year*; as we read in the fourth and fifth Verſes of that Chapter. This Feaſt continu'd among the *Jews*, home to the Days of our Saviour, who for ſome time obſerv'd and kept it with them, as we read *Mat.* 26. 17, 18. and in many other places. But in the Evening in which Chriſt was betray'd, and his

Death

Death and Sufferings drew on, he appointed another Feaſt in the room of the Paſſover; and inſtead of the Lamb that was to be offer'd at the Paſſover, Chriſt who was the true Paſchal Lamb, offer'd up himſelf as a Sacrifice for the Sins of Mankind; thereby fulfilling what St. *John* foretold of him, in ſtiling him *the Lamb of God that taketh away the Sins of the World.* In token whereof, he, a little before his Death, chang'd this *Jewiſh* Feaſt of the Paſſover,

2*dly*, Into the Goſpel Feaſt of the Lord's Supper, which he commanded his Diſciples to keep in Remembrance of him, and to continue ſo to do until his coming again. Then it was that the Paſſover, which was but a Type hereof, ceas'd, and gave place to this Holy Sacrament. And this is the Feaſt that we are now call'd upon to keep in Memory, that *Chriſt our Paſſover was ſacrificed for us.* And this great Feſtival of *Eaſter* is the principal time when this ſacred Feaſt is to be kept and celebrated: For then he paſſed from Death to Life, and was both his own and our Paſſover, by making a Way from the Grave paſſable for us by his Reſurrection. He was indeed our Paſſover on *Good-Friday*, by his paſſing from Life to Death for our Sins; and that is to be kept rather as a Faſt than a Feaſt, in memory of his bitter Death and Paſſion, and our great Guilt that occaſion'd it. But he is now our Paſſover on *Eaſter* in a better Senſe, by his paſſing from Death to Life again, to lead us the Way. And this ought to be kept as a joyful Feaſt indeed, *A Day which the Lord himſelf hath made, and therefore we ought to rejoice and be glad in it.* For on this Day he conquer'd Death, and triumph'd over all the Powers of Hell and Darkneſs: by this he hath made the Deſtroyer paſs over us, or rather, he hath *deſtroyed him that had the Power of Death, which is the Devil*; Heb. 2. 14, 15. By his Reſurrection, he hath made the *Red-Sea* of Blood paſſable for us, and hath tranſlated us from a temporal Death to an eternal Life. For a Memorial whereof, he hath inſtituted the Holy Feaſt of the Euchariſt to be yearly celebrated with a ſpiritual Joy, and Rejoicing in God our Saviour.

This ſacred Feaſt may not be neglected on this Day, by any who ſtile themſelves the Servants and Followers of Chriſt, for whoſe ſake it was principally inſtituted and intended; nor at any other times when the Church requires it to be remember'd, in order to the receiving the Benefits of it. We find the Apoſtles ſtrictly obſerv'd it on the Day of Chriſt's Reſurrection, by breaking of Bread and

Prayer; which occaſion'd the change of the Sabbath from the laſt to the firſt Day of the Week, which hath been kept as the Lord's Day ever ſince.

But beſide the weekly Remembrance of it on the Lord's Day, the Primitive Chriſtians appointed the yearly Feſtival of *Eaſter* for its more ſolemn Commemoration; fixing it, as near as they could, upon the annual Return of the Day of his Reſurrection: And tho a great Controverſy aroſe afterward, about the time of keeping this Feſtival of *Eaſter*, yet they all generally agreed that ſuch a Feaſt was to be kept, albeit they differ'd about the time of obſerving it. But that being ſince determin'd by Councils, and now ſettled by the long Practice and Cuſtom of the Church, we are this Day to keep this Holy Feaſt, and to draw nigh to the Holy Table of our Lord, to remember and receive the Bleſſings convey'd on it.

Thirdly, But how are we to keep this Feaſt? why that the laſt words of the Text will tell us, *viz. Not with the Old Leven, nor with the Leven of Malice and Wickedneſs, but with the unleven'd Bread of Sincerity and Truth.* Where the Apoſtle refers to the Manner of keeping the *Jewiſh* Paſſover, which was with *unleven'd Bread*; and *for ſeven Days there was no Leven to be found in their Houſes*, upon pain of being *cut off from* Iſrael; *Exod.* 12. 15. In alluſion to this, the Apoſtle bids us to *purge out the Old Leven, that we may be a new Lump, as we are unleven'd.* Where by Old Leven, is meant a former vicious and ſinful Courſe of Life; and particularly the Leven of Malice and Wickedneſs, which are apt to ſwell and ſour Mens Minds againſt one another, and are therefore to be caſt out of our Hearts, as things that utterly unfit us for this holy Feaſt of Love and Charity. To come preparedly to it, we muſt purge out the Leven of Pride, which puffs up; the Leven of Malice that imbitters the Mind, and the Leven of Hypocriſy, which makes Men all Show and no Subſtance. Our Saviour bids us *beware of the Leven of the* Phariſees, who were leven'd all over: They had it in their Face, which made them look ſour; they had it in their Tongue, which made them ſpeak great ſwelling Words of Vanity; they had it in their Doctrine, which made it ſmell rank of Superſtition and Corruption. Now the Apoſtle would have all this Leven of corrupt Doctrine and Manners purg'd out, together with the Leven of ill Company, that corrupts

and

and ferments many; that we may be a new Lump, leading new Lives, and becoming new Creatures, *Laying aſide all Malice, and Guile, and Hypocriſy, and Envying, and Evil-ſpeaking; and as new-born Babes, deſiring the ſincere Milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby.*

Come then we muſt to this heavenly Feaſt, but with Souls purg'd of all ill Humours that may hurt the Appetite, or hinder the Digeſtion of this ſpiritual Food. We muſt empty our Hearts of all Malice and Ill-will to any Perſon, and be in perfect Charity with all Men. This is to purge out the old Leven, and to rid our Souls of all Malice and Wickedneſs.

Laſtly, We muſt *keep the Feaſt with the unleven'd Bread of Sincerity and Truth*; that is, with pure and upright Hearts, full of true ſincere Love to God and our Brethren, with a lively Faith in God's Mercy, and with full Purpoſes of Repentance and Amendment of Life; joining together in one Fellowſhip and Communion, and maintaining Brotherly Love among our ſelves.

Wherefore let us all draw nigh to that Holy Table, where Chriſt our Paſſover is ſacrificed for us, and a Feaſt is prepar'd in remembrance of it. The *Jews* were ſtrictly commanded to eat the Paſſover, to teach it to their Children, and command them to obſerve it; and if they ask'd the meaning of it, they were to ſay, it was the Sacrifice of the Lord's Paſſover: And they that refus'd to eat thereof, were to be cut off from *Iſrael*. And ſure the Neglect or Contempt of the Lord's Supper, of which the other was but a Type or Shadow, will meet with a ſorer and ſeverer Puniſhment; this being a trampling under foot the Son of God, and counting the Blood of the Covenant an unholy thing.

DISCOURSE LX.

Rom. vi. 9, 10, 11.

Knowing that Chriſt being rais'd from the Dead, dieth no more, Death hath no more Dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto Sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewiſe reckon ye alſo your ſelves to be dead indeed unto Sin; but alive unto God, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

THIS is the ſecond Sentence ſelected out of Holy Scripture, to uſher in the Service of this Day, and is indeed highly ſuitable to ſo great an Occaſion; for it holds forth to us both the Nature, Manner, and End of Chriſt's Death and Reſurrection, the Subject of this great Feſtival. In which words we have,

Firſt, Something to be known by us, with reſpect to Chriſt's Reſurrection. And,

Secondly, Something like it to be reckon'd upon, in reſpect of our own.

That which we are to know concerning Chriſt, is,

1*ſt*, That he is *rais'd from the Dead.*

2*dly*, That being ſo, *he dieth no more.*

3*dly*, That *Death hath no more Dominion over him*; together with a Reaſon added to inforce and illuſtrate it: *For in that he died, he died unto Sin once; but in that he liveth, unto God.* Which things will require a little Explication.

I begin with the firſt and principal thing to be known concerning Chriſt, and that is, his being rais'd from the Dead; *Knowing this, that Chriſt being rais'd from the Dead*, &c.

This is a Point highly worthy and neceſſary to be known by all Chriſtians, ſince all their hopes of receiving Mercy and Salvation from him, intirely depend upon it. For if Chriſt be not riſen, we are dead in our Sins, and can never hope

hope either for a new Life here, or for eternal Life hereafter. And becauſe this weighty Truth both deſerv'd and needed the greateſt Confirmation, the Holy Ghoſt hath not been wanting to our Faith, in giving us the ſtrongeſt and cleareſt Evidence, to ſettle us in the Knowledg and Belief of it.

Now Chriſt's Reſurrection being a Matter of Fact, the ſureſt, and indeed the only Proof of it muſt be, from the Teſtimony of able, faithful, and ſufficient Witneſſes, who ſaw and convers'd with him after he roſe from the Dead, and from an uninterrupted Tradition of it ever ſince, which is all the Evidence that the thing is capable of: All which we have in this caſe, and no reaſonable Man can require more. Our Apoſtle knew it from the Teſtimony of his own Eyes; for *he ſaw him:* and beſide that, tells us, that *he was ſeen of* Cephas, *then of the Twelve:* A full Jury (ſaith a Father on thoſe words) able to find any Matter of Fact, and to bring in a true Verdict in it. But if that be not ſufficient, which is wont to do in all other Matters, we have the Teſtimony of many more; for he adds, that *he was ſeen of above five hundred Brethren at once*, moſt of which were then living, ready to give in the ſame Verdict, and to atteſt the ſame upon Oath, as we read in 1 *Cor.* 15. 6.

But becauſe 'tis not ſo much the Number, as the Quality and Credibility of the Witneſſes, that begets the Knowledg and Certainty of any Truth; we have abundant Security of that too in this caſe: had they been ſome eaſy credulous Perſons, ready to receive any Report, and forward to believe what they much deſir'd, they might be well enough challeng'd and ſet aſide, and no great ſtreſs could be laid on what they ſaid: but here 'twas quite otherwiſe; for never was any thing more doubted of, and ſearch'd into at firſt, and yet nothing was more firmly and univerſally believ'd after. *Mary Magdalen* firſt ſaw him, and reported it; but *they believed her not.* The two Diſciples travelling to *Emaus*, ſaw him, and related it, but neither could they be believ'd. Divers Women together ſaw him, and came and told the Diſciples; but *their Words ſeem'd to them as idle Tales, and they believ'd them not.* Yea, when Chriſt appear'd to them in Perſon in the Evening of the Reſurrection, they ſaw him, and yet doubted, taking him for a Spectre or Ghoſt, till *he ſhew'd them his Hands and his Side, and bid them handle him and ſee him; for a Spirit hath not Fleſh and Bones as they ſaw him have.* And when the Diſciples after-told

Thomas, who was then abſent, that they had ſeen the Lord, ſo peremptory and ſtubborn were his Doubts, that he plainly declar'd, that *unleſs he ſaw in his Hands the Print of the Nails, and thruſt his Fingers into his Side, he would not believe*: to which things our Saviour ſoon after condeſcended for his Conviction. By which means they all receiv'd that full Satisfaction, that made them boldly preach and teſtify it every where, even with the hazard of their Lives: God permitting them thus to doubt, to put this great Truth out of all doubt, that *Chriſt is raiſed from the Dead*; the firſt thing the Apoſtle would have theſe *Romans* and all Chriſtians to know.

The 2*d* is, that being rais'd from the Dead, *he dieth no more*. This is a Privilege added to the former, after being reſtor'd to Life, to die no more; for ſome have been rais'd from the Dead, and after that have died again: ſo did the Widow's Son of *Naim*, Luke 7.14. the Daughter of *Jairus*, Ruler of the Synagogue, *Chap.* 8. 54. ſo did *Lazarus* and others, *John* 11. 43. All which, tho reſtor'd to Life after Death, yet died afterwards; their Reſurrection was no Exemption from Mortality, but only a Return to the ſame mortal Life, which was again liable to the ſame Stroke of Death. But *Chriſt being rais'd from the Dead, dieth no more*: he ſubmitted to Death merely for our ſake, and when he had done that, he was no longer ſubject to Mortality. Hence the Apoſtle tells us, that *he only hath Immortality*, 1 Tim. 6. 16. that is, he only hath it in and from himſelf, and can alone give it to others; for which reaſon he ſtiles himſelf, *the Reſurrection and the Life*, John 11. 25, 26. adding, that he that *believeth in him, tho he were dead, yet ſhall he live; and whoſoever liveth and believeth in him, ſhall never die* more: for by his Reſurrection *he hath aboliſh'd Death, and brought Life and Immortality to light*, 2 *Tim.* 1. 10. His Reſurrection was attended with no After-Death, but hath raiſed both himſelf and us to a Life immortal; the ſecond thing to be known, *He dies no more.*

The 3*d* is, that *Death hath no more dominion over him*. The firſt Tranſgreſſion hath put all Mankind under the Power and Sentence of Death; *In the day that thou eateſt thereof* (ſaith God) *thou ſhalt ſurely die*: and *as by one Man Sin enter'd into the World, and Death by Sin; even ſo Death paſſed upon all Men, for that all have ſinned*: Rom. 5. 12. After which, we read ſeveral times in that Chapter of the Reign of Death, and the Power it hath gain'd over all the

Sons

Sons of Men; *Death reigned from* Adam *to* Moſes, *ver.* 14. and from thence till now, and is like to continue its Empire to the end of the World. Our Text tells us of *the Dominion of Death*, as if it were ſome high Lord, or mighty Monarch that had large Territories and Dominions under him; and indeed ſo it hath, for its Juriſdiction extends to all Mankind, whom it holds in Vaſſalage and Subjection to him, who *thro fear of Death are all their life-time ſubject to Bondage.* Hence *Job* ſtiles Death *the King of Terrors*, Job 18. 14. exerciſing its Tyranny over all the Poſterity of *Adam*, who are liable to its Arreſt all the Days of their Life.

Now Chriſt by his Reſurrection hath vanquiſh'd this mighty Conqueror, and ſubdu'd this King of Terrors; the Lord of Life hath overcome Death, and *deſtroy'd him that had the Power of Death, that is, the Devil*; Heb. 2. 14. So that Death now hath no more dominion over him, he having broken his Power both for himſelf and us; 'tis *ſwallow'd up in Victory*, by which Death hath no more Sting, nor Hell any more Dominion: Chriſt having the Keys of both, he can let in and out whom he pleaſeth.

Theſe things the Apoſtle confirms and illuſtrates in the following words; *For in that he died, he died unto Sin once; and in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.* Where 'twill be requiſite to ſhew,

1*ſt*, What is meant by his *dying unto Sin.*

2*dly*, What by his dying unto Sin *once.* And,

3*dly*, What by his *living unto God.*

For the 1*ſt*, his *dying unto Sin* was his undergoing Death for our Sins, for he had none of his own to render him liable to it; but he becoming our Surety and Saviour, the whole Guilt and Burden of our Sins lay upon him: and becauſe *the Wages of Sin is Death*, and *without ſhedding of Blood there is no Remiſſion*; he was content to lay down his own precious and innocent Life as a Ranſom for ours, his Death was the Expiation or Propitiation for our Sins: and he died unto Sin once, to make an Atonement for us. Moreover, he died unto Sin to mortify and kill Sin in us, to ſubdue the Power and Dominion of it by the Power of his Grace, that Sin might not reign in our mortal Bodies, nor force us to obey it in the Luſts thereof. In a word, *he died unto Sin once*, that we might not die for it for ever.

But was his dying unto Sin once, ſufficient to ſatisfy for our Sins, which deſerv'd a ſecond and eternal Death? Yes,

the

the exceeding great Excellence and Dignity of his Perſon, the ineſtimable Price of his Blood, the Perfection and Excellency of his Obedience, put ſuch a Merit and Value into his Sufferings, as made them a ſufficient Compenſation for the Sins of the whole World. His dying then unto Sin once, was enough to anſwer the Deſign of it, and there could be no reaſon or need of his dying any more.

But what is meant by his *living unto God?* for the Apoſtle tells us, *In that he liveth, he liveth unto God.* Why, this being oppos'd to his dying unto Sin once, ſignifies his living with God for evermore; that being rais'd from the Dead, he is rais'd to a Life immortal, unchangeable, and that fadeth not away; continuing for ever in Heaven, where he will reſume the Glory he had with the Father before the World began. This is ſpoken as the End and Reward of his Death and Sufferings for our Redemption, that having humbled himſelf ſo low for us, he is become highly exalted, never to die more, but to live for ever with the Father; being ſeated at his Right Hand to make Interceſſion for his People, and e'er long to bring them to Glory, to live and reign for ever with him.

Theſe are the things the Apoſtle would have us to know concerning the Nature, Manner, and End of Chriſt's Reſurrection; all which may ſerve to comfort us under all the Troubles and Miſeries of this Life, and fortify us againſt the Fears of our own or others Death. And this will lead me to the

Second Part of our Text, which is to ſhew what we are to know and count upon our ſelves with relation to theſe things; and that is contain'd in theſe words: *Likewiſe reckon your ſelves dead indeed unto Sin, but alive unto God, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* Where we are bid to count upon two things, in conformity to Chriſt's Reſurrection.

(1.) The dying unto Sin: And,

(2.) The living unto God by Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour.

(1.) I ſay, we are to reckon our ſelves dead indeed unto Sin. To be dead to any thing, we know, is to have no more Motion, Action, or Affection towards it, than is to be found in a dead Body or Carcaſe: and conſequently to be dead to Sin, is to have no Deſire, Inclination, or Sign of Life towards it. Chriſt died unto Sin, that is our Pattern; he did no Sin, nor was any Guile found in his mouth. He died for our Sin, and that is our Encouragement to die to

it,

it, to ceaſe from Sin, and to take no farther pleaſure therein. *How ſhall we that are dead to Sin* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *live any longer therein?* Not that we are or can be free from Sin altogether, for that is a Perfection which the preſent Life will not admit of: but free from the Dominion of Sin, we may and ſhould be, that it may not reign in us, or tyrannize over us, and bring us in bondage to every Temptation. The Influence and Example of Chriſt's Death ſhould ſo mortify Sin in us, as to reckon our ſelves dead to it. And,

(2.) The Virtue of his Reſurrection ſhould ſo quicken our Graces, as to reckon our ſelves *alive unto God.* This St. *Paul* calls *the Power of his Reſurrection*, putting into us a new ſpiritual Life, and enabling us to walk before him in Newneſs of Life. We read in the Goſpel, that Virtue went out of Chriſt's Body for the healing of many Diſeaſes; yea, we find one who by the bare touching the Hem of his Garment was cured of a bloody Iſſue, and made whole. But from his rais'd and glorify'd Body there iſſues a more Divine Power for the healing the ſpiritual Maladies of the Soul, breaking the Force of our Corruptions, and ſtrengthning the Graces of the Spirit within us; whereby we die indeed unto Sin, but are alive unto God by Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

Now living unto God implies in it ſundry things: As,

1. 'Tis the owning him for our Lord, and that we are his Servants, and receive all things from him; ſaying with the Apoſtle, *We are not our own, but are bought with a Price*; and muſt therefore *glorify him with our Souls and Bodies, which are both his:* not living to our ſelves, but to him that made and hath dearly bought us.

2. To live unto God, is to frame our Lives according to his Will, and to order all our Words and Actions by the Rule of God's Word, and the Direction of his Laws: to do otherwiſe, is to live unto our ſelves, and not unto God.

3. To live unto God, is to ſeek only or chiefly his Glory, and in the whole Courſe of our Life to ſtudy the promoting of his Honour; according to St. *Paul*'s Advice, *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the Praiſe and Glory of God.*

Laſtly, To live unto God, is in all the Dangers and Difficulties of our Life to refer our ſelves unto him, and to depend chiefly upon his Bleſſing and Protection: ſo did the Pſalmiſt, caſting himſelf upon the Care of Divine Providence,

dence in all the Affairs and Occurrences of his Life, ſtiling him his Shield, his Buckler, his ſtrong Tower to which he might always reſort, the Horn alſo of his Salvation, and his Refuge. In a word, to live unto God, is to love and fear him above all things, to put our whole Truſt and Affiance in him, to honour his holy Name and Word, and to ſerve him truly all the days of our Life. Which things becauſe we cannot do of our ſelves, we are minded of doing them *by Jeſus Chriſt our Lord:* that is, by imploring the Aid and Aſſiſtance of his Grace, which is alone able to work this great Work in us and for us. Of our ſelves we can no more raiſe a Soul from the Death of Sin, than a dead Body from the Duſt of the Earth. Theſe are both the Effects of a Divine Power, and above the Sphere of any mortal Creature. St. *Auſtin* obſerv'd long ſince, that *Mary Magdalen*, who was *dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins*, had a greater Reſurrection to a Life of Grace, than her Brother *Lazarus* to a natural Life, *after he had lain four days in the Grave.* Both of them were effected by Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, and neither of them could be by any inferior Agent.

To draw then to a Concluſion; let us learn,

1ſt, From Chriſt's Death to die unto Sin, and to crucify the Fleſh with the Affections and Luſts: let us every day ſtrive againſt the Motions of Sin ſtirring in us, weakning the Power of our Corruptions, and breaking the Force of all its Temptations. This was the main End of our Saviour's dying for us, to mortify the old Man in us, and ſubdue the Fleſh unto the Spirit. *He gave himſelf for us* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *to redeem us from all Iniquity, and to purify to himſelf a peculiar People zealous of good Works*; Tit. 2. 14. Let us with St. *Paul* be crucify'd to the World, and the World unto us; that we be neither enſnared by the Charms, nor endanger'd by the Frowns of it, but may paſs through it with Patience and Innocence to a better Life.

2dly, From Chriſt's Reſurrection let us learn to live unto God, by ordering our Converſation after his Will, and directing all our Works to his Glory. *As we are planted together in the Likeneſs of his Death, by being bury'd with him in Baptiſm*; ſo let us be *planted likewiſe in the Likeneſs of his Reſurrection*, by riſing again from the Grave of Sin, and walking with him in Newneſs of Life. And this will carry us with Comfort thro all the Troubles and Calamities of this Life, and bring us at laſt to Life everlaſting: which God of his infinite Mercy grant, thro Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE LXI.

1 Cor. xv. 20, 21, 22.

Now is Christ risen from the Dead, and become the First-fruits of them that slept. For since by Man came Death, by Man came also the Resurrection of the Dead: for as in Adam *all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

OF Christ's rising from the Dead, something hath been said before, and more will be said hereafter. At present, the Words read unto you give us the Foundation of the Hope that we have of our own Resurrection, grounded on that of our Saviour's; for he is here stiled *the First-fruits of them that slept:* and that as *Adam* was a publick Person in bringing Death upon all Mankind, so is Christ the publick Representative of all Believers, to restore them to Life and Salvation. Which things being now made the Subject of our Meditations, I shall,

First, Shew in what sense, and for what reason, Christ is here said to be *the First-fruits of them that sleep*. And,

Secondly, Shall consider the Comparison or Resemblance between *Adam* and Christ, the one in bringing Death, the other in restoring Life to all their Followers; which things are the Sum and Substance of these Words.

First then, In what sense, and for what reason, is Christ said to be the First-fruits of them that sleep? The First-fruits, you know, are the Earnest or Beginnings of Harvest, which were requir'd to be consecrated unto God, as an Acknowledgment of receiving all the rest from him. Hence we read in *Gen.* 4. that *Cain* brought *the First-fruits of the Ground*, and *Abel* the *Firstlings of his Flock, as an Offering unto the Lord:* which was the first Original of Sacrifices and Oblations. After that, we find an express Command from God, *The first ripe Fruits of thy Land thou shalt bring unto the Lord*, Exod. 22. 29. The same Precept

is

is renew'd, *Chap.* 23. 16. But the Law of the First-fruits is moſt fully ſet forth in *Lev.* 23. 10, 11. The manner of conſecrating them was briefly this: One Sheaf was to be taken out of all the Sheafs of the Field, which were before eſteem'd unholy, and was to be brought as the First-fruits of the Harveſt unto the Prieſt. That Sheaf the Prieſt was to lift up in the name of the reſt, and to wave it to and fro before the Lord; and thereby it was conſecrated, and became holy and acceptable to him: and by doing of that, not only the Sheaf lifted up, but all the Sheaves in the Field were holy unto the Lord. So the Apoſtle tells us, *If the First-fruits be holy, the whole Lump is alſo holy; and if the Root be holy, ſo are the Branches:* Rom. 11. 16. Now the Reſemblance here muſt run thus: All Mankind were as ſo many dead Sheaves before God, all unholy and profane; one of them, that is Chriſt, was in the manner of a Sheaf at this time taken out of the number of the Dead, and in the name of the reſt lifted up from the Grave, and at his riſing was in a manner waved and ſhaken; for *there was a great Earthquake*, Mat. 28. 2. By virtue hereof, he as the First-fruits being reſtor'd to Life, all the reſt of the Dead are in him intitled to the ſame, and rais'd with him; for he was not ſo lifted up for himſelf alone, but for us too, and in the name of all his Followers: and ſo is juſtly ſtiled the *First-fruits of the Dead*, and the First-born from the Grave. For as the First-fruits under the Law did ſanctify the whole Maſs or Heap of the other Fruits; ſo Chriſt being raiſed from the Dead, ſanctifies all Believers to a bleſſed Reſurrection.

But here the Order of Time is likewiſe to be conſider'd; for as the First-fruits under the Law were reap'd and receiv'd before the reſt of the Crop, ſo Chriſt's Reſurrection muſt go before ours, and 'tis by virtue of his that the riſing of Believers follows. In this Order the Apoſtle ranks them, ver. 23. *Chriſt the First-fruits, afterward they that are Chriſt's at his coming.* Hence our Saviour ſtiles himſelf *the Reſurrection and the Life*, John 11. 25. not only becauſe he is the Author of the Reſurrection, and the ſole Reſtorer of Life; but becauſe he is the Earneſt, the Pledg, and the First-fruits of both. He alone can give and reſtore Life; *I have power* (ſaith he) *to lay down my Life, and I have power to take it up*; John 10. 18. And the ſame Power he hath and may exerciſe over the Lives of others: an Inſtance whereof he gave in *Lazarus*, who after he had lain four

Days

Days in the Grave, till his Body began to putrify, at Christ's Call came forth, and return'd to Life again. Yea, Christ not only hath this Power, but is himself that Divine Power, by which it is effected: *I am he that liveth* (saith he) *and was dead; and behold! I live for evermore, and have the Keys of Death and Hell.* Rev. 1. 18. He can open and shut the Grave as he pleases, and confines and loosens out of that Prison as he thinks fit; for he hath conquer'd Death, and *destroy'd him that had the Power of Death, that is, the Devil.* Heb. 2. 14. Hence he assures all them that believe in him, *that tho they are dead, yet shall they live again; and whosoever liveth and believeth in him, shall never die:* for which he is truly said to be *the Resurrection and the Life to all that believe in him.* As for the rest, to wit, the unbelieving Part of the World, they are rais'd by Christ too, not as a Mediator to give them everlasting Life, but as a Judg, to sentence them to eternal Death, which, having no share in the Atonement, their wilful Sins have justly deserved.

Thus we see in what sense Christ is said to be the First-fruits or First-born from the Dead; he being the Cause, the Earnest, and the Pledge of our Resurrection: for as an Earnest is given to secure a Bargain, and the First-fruits offer'd to God had an Assurance of his Blessing upon all the rest; so Christ's raising himself and others from the Grave, is a certain Pledg and Security of our rising after him. Upon all which accounts he is stil'd *the First-fruits of them that slept.* Where we may farther observe,

The Manner of the Apostle's expressing it; which is not the First-fruits of the Dead, but of them that slept: thereby intimating to us, that Christ by his Resurrection hath alter'd the Nature of Death, and turn'd it into a Sleep, which we know is the Rest and Refreshment, not the Ruin or Destruction of our Bodies. *If he sleep, he shall do well,* said the Disciples concerning *Lazarus*; and if we sleep in Jesus, we may rest in Hope of rising again with him. This is indeed a blessed and happy Change, a Burying-place turned into a Dormitory, the Grave into a Bed, and Death into Sleep; insomuch that when we die, we do but lie down to take our Rest till the Morning of the Resurrection, when we shall awake again into a glorious Immortality. *When I awake* (saith the Psalmist) *I shall be satisfy'd with thy Likeness.* The Scripture frequently represents Death as a Sleep, and the Resurrection as an awaking out of it: *They*

that

that ſleep in the Duſt ſhall awake; ſome to everlaſting Life, and ſome to everlaſting Shame and Contempt; Dan. 12. 2. *Our Friend* Lazarus *ſleepeth* (ſaith our Saviour) when he told his Diſciples of his Death; *but I go* (ſaith he) *that I may awake him out of Sleep*: John 11. 11. St. *Stephen* when he had pray'd, and gave up the Ghoſt, is ſaid to *fall aſleep*, Acts 7. 60. And ſo is *David*, Chap. 13. 36. And *them that ſleep in Jeſus* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *will God bring with him*, 1 Theſſ. 4. 14. Now as Sleep binds up the Senſes awhile, to give Eaſe to the Body; ſo doth the Grave bury our Cares and Sorrows, to give Reſt unto the Soul. Accordingly, *a Voice from Heaven*, called them *Bleſſed that die in the Lord, becauſe they reſt from their Labours*; they withdraw a while into the Grave to put off the Rags of human Frailty, that they may be clothed upon with the Robes of Glory and Immortality. And indeed Chriſtianity gives us far greater Aſſurances of their awaking, who ſleep in the Duſt, than we can have of theirs who ſleep in their Beds; having a firm Promiſe of the one, but none of the other: for Chriſt is become the Firſt-fruits of them that ſlept. He roſe as our Forerunner and Repreſentative; and tho he is got up before us, yet will he ſhortly come again, and draw us after him.

But here it may be ask'd, Can one Man's Reſurrection have ſuch an Influence, as to raiſe all the reſt of Mankind? to which I anſwer, Yes, as well as one Man's Sin could bring Death upon all the reſt. And this will lead me to the

Second Part of our Text, which is to conſider the Analogy or Correſpondence between *Adam* and *Chriſt* in the Matter of Life and Death, held forth in theſe words: *Since by Man came Death, by Man came alſo the Reſurrection of the Dead; for as in* Adam *all die, even ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive.* Where the Reſemblance relates,

1ſt, To the Perſons concern'd in bringing in Life and Death; and they were Perſons of the ſame Nature, Men both, for by Man came Death, and by Man came alſo the Reſurrection of the Dead.

2dly, To the Capacity or Station wherein they were ſet, both being publick Perſons and Repreſentatives of all Mankind in both thoſe Effects; the one bringing Death, the other reſtoring Life to all Men.

3dly, Here is a Compariſon between the Means or Cauſes of both theſe Effects; Death came in by the Puniſhment

of

of one Man's Sin, and Life by the Power of the Reſurrection of another.

Laſtly, Here is mention of the particular Perſons or Authors of both theſe things; and they are *Adam* and *Chriſt: For as in* Adam *all die, even ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive.* In all which, we are to conſider the Truth of the Facts, together with the Juſtice and Reaſonableneſs of them.

For the Matter of Fact, moſt certain it is, that we all die in *Adam*; he was the Root of all Mankind, and all we as ſo many Branches ſpringing from him. Now, we know, if the Root be dead, all the Branches muſt wither and die with it, and the one cannot long ſurvive the other. God Almighty gave *Adam* a Law to try his Obedience, which if he had kept, he with all his Deſcendants had ſtood and continu'd happy to this day: but he, by tranſgreſſing it, unhappily fell, and entail'd Miſery and Mortality upon all his Poſterity ever ſince. This Covenant was, *Do this, and live*; break it, and die: *for in the Day that thou eateſt thereof, thou ſhalt ſurely die.* Now *Adam* violating this Covenant, by eating the forbidden Fruit, tainted his Blood, and brought Guilt and Death upon the whole Race of Mankind. So the Apoſtle tells us, that *by one Man Sin enter'd into the World, and Death by Sin; even ſo Death paſs'd upon all Men, for that all have ſinned:* Rom. 5. 12. ſo that Death is now the common Lot and Portion of all Men, to whom *it is appointed once to die, and after Death to Judgment.*

And as 'tis certain that in *Adam* we all die, ſo is it no leſs certain that in Chriſt we ſhall all be made alive: for as the Branches receive Sap from the Vine, and are cheriſh'd and reviv'd by the Root, even ſo is the Church by Chriſt; 'tis his own Compariſon, *John* 15. 1, 2, &c. As the Members live in and by the Head, and as the Body cannot be drown'd whilſt the Head is above Water; ſo do all Chriſtians live in Chriſt, nor can they always remain bury'd in the Earth, whilſt he is above Ground, and aſcended up into Heaven: for the Head being riſen, the Members muſt riſe together with him. Chriſt hath taken off the Taint that was upon the Blood of *Adam*'s Poſterity by the firſt Tranſgreſſion, and reverſing the Attainder, hath reſtor'd them again by his Righteouſneſs. As there was a Statute, that all Men ſhould die in *Adam*, becauſe they all ſinned in him; ſo was there another Statute, that

all that are in Christ should live in him, because they partake of his Righteousness. The first Statute said, He that brake the Covenant, by doing what was forbidden, should surely die: The second said, He that kept it, by doing what was requir'd, should live in it. Now *Adam* broke this Covenant, and so brought in Death; Christ fulfil'd it to a tittle, and so restor'd Life.

Nor may we think this strange, or any way inconsistent with Reason and Justice, but highly consonant and agreeable with both: for why should not all rise by one Man's Resurrection, as well as all Men fall and die by one Man's Transgression? Is there a greater Virtue or Influence in *Adam*'s Sin to destroy, than there is in Christ's Satisfaction to save? and if Death came by the one, why may not Life by the other, especially since the Merits of the latter are infinitely greater and more valuable than the Demerits of the former?

But neither of them (may some say) appear just or reasonable with respect to those that descend from them, or come after them: for how could any justly suffer Death for the Sin of one, who liv'd so many thousand Years before they were born, to which they could be no Parties, nor give any Consent? Or how could any receive Life from the Righteousness of one, who liv'd and dy'd so many hundred Years before they had any Being, in which they could be no Partners, nor be any way said to be Actors in it? Why, the Answer to this is easy and clear: for God Almighty, who was the Maker and Disposer of all things, made these two Persons the publick Heads and Representatives of all Mankind; and all that descended from or depended upon them, were to stand or fall by their Obedience or Disobedience to him. *Adam* was the natural Head and Root of all that sprung from his Loins; and all his Posterity coming from that Stock, fell and became mortal by his Disobedience. Christ is the spiritual Head of all Believers, who being engrafted in him by a new Birth, become the Members of his mystical Body the Church, and are rais'd to Life and Immortality by his Obedience: both which may be well thought highly just and reasonable, being order'd by the Will and Appointment of God, whose Will is the truest and surest Rule of all Right and Justice.

Thus

Thus I have briefly conſider'd the two main Particulars of our Text, and given you ſome ſhort Account of the Equity and Reaſonableneſs of both. What we are to learn from them, by way of Application, will be chiefly comprehended in theſe two things.

1*ſt*, To lament the Miſery and Mortality of Mankind by *Adam*'s Sin. And,

2*ly*, To bleſs God for our Reſtoration to Life and Immortality, by the Death and Reſurrection of Chriſt; acknowledging the Juſtice of God in inflicting the one, and adoring his Goodneſs in granting the other. For the

1*ſt*, We find *David* bewailing, that *he was conceiv'd in Sin, and brought forth in Iniquity*; Pſal. 51. 5. and all we who, by natural Deſcent, proceed from our firſt Parents, partake of the ſame Guilt and Puniſhment; by which we are all liable to the Stroke of a natural Death here, and, without Repentance, to the Sting of a ſecond and eternal Death hereafter. And as *David juſtify'd God in his Saying*, or Sentence pronounc'd againſt us, *and clear'd him when he was judg'd*, ver. 4. ſo ought we ſtill to ſay with him, that *God is righteous in all his Ways, and holy in all his Works*. In like manner we find St. *Paul*, in his unregenerate State, crying out, *O wretched Man that I am! who ſhall deliver me from this Body of Sin?* Rom. 7. withal owning *Death to be the juſt Wages of Sin*: and we conſidering our natural State, ought frequently to do the ſame. But yet,

2*ly*, He thanks God for the *Gift of eternal Life, thro Jeſus Chriſt our Lord*, of which we are begotten again to a lively Hope, by the Reſurrection of our Saviour: for he being the Firſt-Fruits from the Dead, hath conſecrated a new and living way for us thro the Grave to Life everlaſting; and he being riſen from thence as our Head, will ſurely draw his Members after him. This is a Mercy never to be forgotten by the Sons of Men, but is more eſpecially to be remembred at this Seaſon, when we are call'd upon to celebrate his Death and Reſurrection, and in a Feaſt too inſtituted by himſelf for that purpoſe; for which therefore we are to prepare and addreſs our ſelves, that we may remember him at his own Table, and receive the Benefits purchas'd by him at his holy Altar. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE LXII.

The EPISTLE for *Easter-Day.*

Col. iii. 1——8.

If ye then be riſen with Chriſt, ſeek thoſe things that are above, where Chriſt ſitteth on the Right Hand of God. Set your Affections on Things above, not on Things of the Earth: for ye are dead, and your Life is hid with Chriſt in God, &c.

THE Wiſdom of the Church (as a Reverend Father hath well obſerv'd) hath ſo order'd Matters in its publick Service, that the Goſpel for the Day lets us know what was done for us, and the Epiſtle what is to be done by us; the one ſhews us the Benefit, the other the Duty that appertains and intitles to it.

This is evident in the Service for this great Feſtival, where the Goſpel ſhews us Chriſt riſen from the Dead; and the Epiſtle ſeeks from thence to raiſe our Minds and Meditations after him, and to fix them upon the Place and Things where he is gone.

The Collect for the Day hath reſpect to both, minding us, that Chriſt, by dying, hath overcome Death; and by riſing again, hath open'd unto us the Gate of everlaſting Life: from thence teaching us to pray, that he who, by his ſpecial Grace preventing us, puts into our Minds good Deſires after him, would, by his continual Help, bring the ſame to good effect.

The Epiſtle for the Day, which I am now to ſpeak to, ſuppoſes two things:

Firſt, That Chriſt is riſen. And,

Secondly, That we are riſen with him: *If ye then be riſen with Chriſt.* And from thence infers two things,

1*ſt*, That we ſhould *ſeek thoſe things which are above, where Chriſt ſitteth at the right Hand of God.* And to that end,

2*ly*, That

2*ly*, That we ſhould take off *our Affections from the things of the Earth*, and *ſet them upon the things of Heaven*. Theſe things, together with ſome Motives and Directions to this purpoſe, are the Subject of this Day's Epiſtle, and muſt be of the following Diſcourſe. I begin with the

Firſt Thing here ſuppos'd, *viz.* That Chriſt is riſen. This is that great Act of our Saviour's, upon which all our Faith and Hope in him depend: *For if Chriſt be not riſen, then is our Preaching vain, and your Faith is alſo vain*; 1 Cor. 15. 14. If that be not true, then is all our Chriſtianity built upon the Sand, and can ſtand us in no ſtead; then are we Chriſtians in the moſt hopeleſs and helpleſs Condition, and of all Men the moſt miſerable: and therefore we find our Saviour appealing to his Reſurrection for the Truth of his Doctrine, and uſing it as an Argument to put our Truſt in him: *Deſtroy this Temple* (ſaith he) meaning his Body, *and in three Days I will raiſe it up again*. Now if he had fail'd herein, and continu'd ſtill under the power of Death, he might have been taken for an Impoſtor, and all the Hopes of his Diſciples had been for ever bury'd with him: But thanks be to God, he that *was dead is alive again, and lives for evermore, and hath the Keys of Hell and Death*: Rev. 1. 18. By his thus riſing from the Dead, he rais'd the dying Hopes of his Followers, confirm'd the Truth of his Doctrine, and ſecur'd to us Life and Immortality: And therefore we read, that from the Apoſtles telling one another the News of his Reſurrection, there aroſe an antient Cuſtom in ſome Churches, for Chriſtians to ſalute one another on *Eaſter* Morning, with this Saying, *The Lord is riſen*; and the Anſwer was, *The Lord is riſen indeed*. And the whole Chriſtian Church hath appointed a yearly and ſolemn Commemoration of it with Adoration and Thankſgiving. And becauſe this Article of Chriſt's Reſurrection requir'd the cleareſt and the fulleſt Proof, the Spirit of God hath not been wanting to our Faith herein, by confirming it with the Teſtimony of God, of Angels, and Men, as we ſhall ſee hereafter. In the mean time I proceed to the

Second Thing here ſuppos'd, and that is, that *we are riſen with Chriſt*; *If ye then be riſen with Chriſt*. Where the Apoſtle takes it for granted, not only that Chriſt is riſen, but that we too are riſen with him.

But how can we be ſaid to be riſen with Chriſt, when he, who was once dead, is riſen again, and gone to Heaven, and we having not yet taſted of Death, remain ſtill alive upon Earth?

In anſwer to this, we are to take notice of a twofold Reſurrection: the one of the Soul, from the Death of Sin to a Life of Righteouſneſs, call'd, in Scripture, *The firſt Reſurrection*; the other of the Body, from the Grave to a Life of Glory, call'd, *The ſecond Reſurrection*. In the firſt ſenſe we are ſaid to be riſen with Chriſt already, our Souls being, by the virtue of his Reſurrection, quicken'd into a ſpiritual Life of Grace here; in the other ſenſe, we ſhall riſe with him hereafter, when the Power of his Reſurrection ſhall quicken our mortal Bodies into an eternal Life of Glory and Immortality.

Now 'tis in the former ſenſe that all good Chriſtians are here ſuppos'd to be riſen with Chriſt, being, by the virtue of his Reſurrection, rais'd to a new and ſpiritual Life: And this is begun in our Baptiſm, wherein we, who are born dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins, are regenerated, and *born again of Water and the Holy Ghoſt*, and thereby *quicken'd* unto a Life of Righteouſneſs. So St. *Paul* tells us, Rom. 6. 3, 4, 5. *Know ye not, that as many of us as are baptiz'd into Chriſt, are baptiz'd into his Death? Therefore we are bury'd with him by Baptiſm into Death, that like as Chriſt was rais'd from the Dead by the Glory of the Father, even ſo we alſo ſhould walk in Newneſs of Life: for if we are planted together in the Likeneſs of his Death, we ſhall be alſo in the Likeneſs of his Reſurrection.* That is, as by being dipp'd in the Waters of Baptiſm, we are made conformable to Chriſt's Death, by dying unto Sin; ſo by riſing again out of the Waters, we are made conformable to his Reſurrection, by living unto Righteouſneſs: which new and regenerate Life, receiv'd in the Sacrament of Baptiſm, is after maintain'd and preſerv'd by the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. And in this ſenſe it is, that we are here ſaid to be *riſen with Chriſt*. From whence the Apoſtle infers two or three things:

1*ſt*, That we ſhould raiſe our Minds to the things above: *If ye then be riſen with Chriſt, ſeek thoſe things that are above, where Chriſt ſitteth at the Right Hand of God.* By the things above we are to underſtand the things of Heaven and the Kingdom of God, the Salvation of our Souls, and the great Affairs of Eternity, call'd the *Things above*;

above; becauſe they are far above all things here below, both in Excellence and Situation, in Dignity and Duration. To ſeek thoſe things, is to labour to know, to ſearch into, and to enquire after them; and that too not ſlightly, coldly, and indifferently, like thoſe that ſeek as if they ſought not, but in good earneſt, with all our Skill and Might, as thoſe that give themſelves no Reſt till they have found. All ſeeking, we know, implies Motion, Diligence, and Intention, without which nothing of Worth can be had; 'tis oppos'd to Lazineſs and ſitting ſtill, which neither ſeeks nor finds any thing: And ſince even the things here beneath cannot be come by without Labour and Travail, 'tis great Folly to think that the things above will drop into our Laps without ſeeking; no, we ſhall not ſtumble or hit upon them unawares, but they at once call for and deſerve our diligent Search. But how are we to ſeek theſe things? Why, in the way and means of God's own appointing; to wit, by Prayer, Meditation, hearing of God's Word, receiving the Holy Sacraments, with all other Acts and Exerciſes of a Holy Life: for the new regenerate Life is not an idle, careleſs, but an active Life, that conſiſts in Motion, and puts us upon the utmoſt Care and Pains in ſeeking after Happineſs. And where is that? Why, in Heaven, *where Chriſt ſitteth at the Right Hand of God.* The Right Hand of God is the Place of the greateſt Power and Glory, of the higheſt Honour and Happineſs; and ſince Chriſt, with whom we are riſen, is ſeated there, let us elevate our Minds, and ſeek and make after him. To this end the Apoſtle adviſes,

2*dly*, To *ſet our Affections on the Things above, not on Things on the Earth.* A Man will not ſeek what he doth not truly affect. And therefore to quicken our Motion and Endeavours after the Things above, we muſt ſet our Hearts and Affections upon them, and that will draw us powerfully after them: we are reſtleſs in the Purſuit of what our Hearts are ſet upon, and no Motion is ſo nimble and ſteddy as that which mounts upon the Wings of Love. Let us then count the Things above our chiefeſt or only Treaſure, and lay it up in Heaven, where 'tis free from all Hazards, and will prove a Portion and Maintenance to us for ever; not on the Earth, where 'tis ſubject to the Moth, the Ruſt, and the Robber, and will ſtand us in no ſtead when we ſtand in moſt need of it: and then where our Treaſure is, there will our Hearts be alſo; the Heart will follow the

Treaſure: and if we place it in Heaven and heavenly Things, the Mind and Affections will be fix'd there, and make us like Eagles, be ſtill ſoaring aloft and mounting towards it; but if we place it on the Earth and earthly Things, the Heart will be glu'd to the Earth, and make us like Moles, continually digging and groveling in it. Let our Ambition then aſpire higher than the Things of this World, and our Affections carry us to the Things above; not to be above others in Power, Honour, and Preferments here on Earth, for theſe are all Temporal and Tranſitory Things, but to the Honours and Happineſs of Heaven, which are Eternal and Never-failing. And for this the Apoſtle adds a good Reaſon in the next Verſe:

For ye are dead, and your Life is hid with Chriſt in God; that is, by the Profeſſion and Promiſe made in Baptiſm, we are dead to this World, having renounc'd all the Evil Courſes, Cuſtoms, and Practices of it, and bid adieu to all its Pomps and Vanities: Inſomuch, that we are to have no more reliſh or regard to them, than a dead Man that is void of all Senſe and Motion: for *how ſhould we that are dead to ſin* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *live any longer therein?* Rom. 6. 2. Baptiſm is a vow'd Death unto Sin, and the beginning of a new Chriſtian Life, whereby we are oblig'd to live no longer to our ſelves, but to him that hath ſo dearly bought us. Hence we find St. *Paul* declaring, that he was *crucified to the World, and the World was crucified to him*: and elſewhere, that *he was crucified with Chriſt*; *nevertheleſs* (ſaith he) *I live, yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me: and the Life that I now live in the Fleſh, I live by the Faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himſelf for me.* Gal. 2. 20.

And this *Life is here ſaid to be hid with Chriſt in God*: Tho it be not diſcern'd or underſtood by the World, yet 'tis well known to God, by whoſe inviſible Influence it is cheriſh'd and maintain'd: And tho we are not yet in full Fruition of this Spiritual and Eternal Life, yet is it in ſafe Cuſtody with God in Chriſt.

And when he who is our Life ſhall appear, then ſhall we appear with him in Glory. This leads to the ſecond Senſe, in which we are ſaid to be riſen with Chriſt; to wit, the Reſurrection of the Body. Chriſt hath ſtil'd himſelf, *The Reſurrection and the Life*, John 11. 25. adding, that *he that believeth in him, tho he were dead, yet ſhall he live; and whoſoever liveth and believeth in him, ſhall never die* an eternal

nal Death. His riſing again from the Grave was the Pledg and Earneſt of our Reſurrection: upon which account he is ſtil'd, *The Firſt-born from the Dead*, and *the Firſt-Fruits of them that ſlept*. And tho he ſuffer us to ſtay here awhile after him to ſtruggle with Sickneſs and Death, yet when he who is our Reſurrection and our Life ſhall appear again with Power and great Glory, then ſhall we be rais'd again, and appear with him in Glory: then ſhall our frail mortal Bodies which are ſown in Weakneſs, be rais'd in Power, and be cloth'd with Honour and Immortality.

Now from theſe two Reſurrections, the one of the Soul from the Death of Sin; the other of the Body, from the Grave of Corruption; the Apoſtle infers,

3*dly*, The great Duty of Mortification, *ver.* 5. *Mortify therefore your Members that are upon the Earth; Fornication, Uncleanneſs, inordinate Affection, evil Concupiſcence, and Covetouſneſs, which is Idolatry.* Where by *the Members that are upon the Earth*, we are to underſtand all thoſe vicious Inclinations that are in our Members, and carry them out only to earthly and ſenſual Pleaſures; or thoſe vile Affections and Luſts that make up the Body of Sin, with which the Soul is ſo encumber'd: ſuch are Adultery, Fornication, all beaſtly and unnatural Luſts, impure Deſires, and an inordinate Love and Purſuit of worldly Things; which by ſerving Mammon more than God, is juſtly branded for Idolatry. Theſe we are commanded to mortify and ſubdue, to caſt off the Reliques of the Old Man, and to be renew'd in the Spirit of our Mind. This the Profeſſion we have taken upon us, obliges all Chriſtians to; the New Life to which we are rais'd and regenerated by the Holy Spirit, engages us to all Purity of Heart and Life, to poſſeſs our Veſſels in Sanctification and Honour, and to conſecrate our Bodies as the Living Temples of the Holy Ghoſt. To do otherwiſe, is to contradict and diſhonour our Holy Calling, to pollute the Manſions of the Holy Spirit, and to make the Members of Chriſt the Members of a Harlot; which things are highly provoking unto God, and pernicious both to our Bodies and Souls. So are we here told, that,

For theſe things cometh the Wrath of God upon the Children of Diſobedience. For beſide that they deprive us of the Favour of God, and the Peace of our Minds here; they exclude us for ever from the Kingdom of God hereafter: *For this ye know* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *that no Whoremonger or unclean Perſon, or covetous Man, who is an Idolater, hath any Inhe-*

Inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ, and of God; Ephes. 5. 5. This is a matter taught by the Light of Reason and natural Conscience, as well as the Light of Scripture, and is therefore a Truth well known to all: the Mischief these sinful Lusts do to the Body, the Soul, the Estate, and the good Name, is so obvious, that none can be ignorant of it; beside, the Vengeance of God is known to pursue those Persons and Places where these Wickednesses reign; of which the sore Judgments that befel *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, *Jerusalem*, and other Places, are sad Instances.

Of these things the Apostle gave these *Colossians* the greater Warning, because they themselves had been formerly guilty of them. *In the which things* (saith he) *ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them.* Meaning, that while they continued Heathens, and convers'd among them, they walk'd and wallow'd with them in these detestable Vices; but now being chang'd and converted into Christians, and having the Danger and Deformity of their former sinful Courses more plainly laid before them, they were to abhor and abandon them, and to walk no longer in them.

This is the Substance of this Day's Epistle, which minds us of a double Resurrection; the one present, the other future: The present Resurrection is from a spiritual Death in Trespasses and Sins, to a spiritual Life of Grace and Holiness; the future, is from a Corporal Death to a Life of Glory and Happiness: both which are to be minded by us, especially on this Day of our Saviour's Resurrection, when we may be said in both those senses to be risen with Christ; that is, by the Virtue and Power of his Resurrection. Upon the whole then, let us learn hence,

1*st*, To confirm our Faith in this great Article, and improve it to a rising to Newness of Life now, that we may rise to an Eternal Life of Blessedness hereafter: for *blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first Resurrection; because on such, the second Death shall have no Power.* Rev. 20. 6.

2*dly*, Let us learn from hence, to raise our Minds and Affections above the perishing Trifles of this World, and to fix them upon the more durable and desirable Treasures of Heaven. There is nothing here below, that is worth half that Care and Sollicitude that Men are wont to bestow upon it; the greatest Glories and glittering Things in it, afford no Content or Satisfaction, and in a little time vanish

and

and paſs away, and then are as if they had never been: *Seekeſt thou great things for thy ſelf? (*ſaith the Prophet) *ſeek them not*; Jer. 45, 5. They are not worth the ſeeking: for either we cannot find them, and then the Labour is in vain; or if we do, we find little or nothing in them; and upon that account the Labour is not much better. This World is no Reſting-place for the Soul, and to ſeek for it here, is to ſeek the Living among the Dead: and therefore we have all reaſon to wiſh with the Pſalmiſt, *Oh! that I had Wings like a Dove, for then would I flee away and be at reſt*. *We have here no continuing City*, (ſaith the Apoſtle) *but we ſeek one to come*: 'Tis in vain to ſet up our Reſt here, where none is to be had; we muſt mount higher, if we mean to find reſt to our Souls. Seek then, and ſet your Affections upon the Things above, which are alone worthy of your Love and your Purſuit. Chriſt being riſen, let us go after him with our Souls now, that our Bodies too may ſhortly follow him; he is ſeated at the Right Hand of God, and if we love and long after him, he will e'er long take us to the Seat of his Glory.

In the mean time, let us remember the Death and Reſurrection of our Lord in that Holy Feaſt, appointed by himſelf to that purpoſe. By his Death he hath led the King of Terrors in Triumph, and loos'd the Bands of Death, that we might not be holden of it: By his Reſurrection he hath open'd to us the Gate of Everlaſting Life, and obtain'd an Entrance for us into the Kingdom of Heaven. And tho he be already aſcended thither, yet, like *Eliſha*, he hath left his Mantle behind him, even the Myſteries of this Holy Sacrament; where by eating his Fleſh and drinking his Blood, are repreſented and convey'd to us the Bleſſings of both: ſo that he hath left his Love with us, tho his Perſon be taken from us. By receiving this Bread of Life, we ſhall quicken our Appetite to the things above; and by taking this Potion of Immortality, we ſhall thirſt for a fuller Draught of thoſe Pleaſures, which are at God's Right Hand for evermore. In a word, let us feed on Chriſt, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; ſo ſhall we, e'er long, feaſt with him for ever; and by riſing now from the Grave of Sin, he will ſhortly raiſe us to the Life Immortal. Which God grant, for the ſake of his dearly beloved Son, who died for our Sins, and roſe again for our Juſtification. *Amen.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE LXIII.

The GOSPEL for *Easter-Day.*

St. John xx. 1——11.

The first Day of the Week cometh Mary Magdalen *early, when it was yet dark, unto the Sepulchre, and seeth the Stone taken away from the Sepulchre: then she runneth, and cometh to* Simon Peter, *and to the other Disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith, They have taken away the Lord out of the Sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him,* &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day gives us a Relation of Christ's Resurrection, from the Mouth of those that were Eye-witnesses to the Truth of it; and indeed this being a Matter of Fact, the best Proof or Evidence of it must be from the Testimony of competent and credible Witnesses, that were able to judg, and narrowly look'd into the Matter; of which sort we have some here, and more elsewhere. And that we may be well establish'd in the Belief of this important Truth, upon which all our Religion stands, I shall produce the Witnesses, and then sum up the Evidence brought by them to confirm it. And the

First here mention'd by St. *John* is *Mary Magdalen*; to whom St. *Matthew* adds *another Mary*, Mat. 28. 1. who, as St. *Mark* tells us, was Mary *the Mother of* James *and* John, *Mark* 16. 1. St. *Luke* adds to these *Joanna*, the Wife of *Herod*'s Steward, and other Women, *Luke* 24. 10. These who had follow'd our Saviour in his Life-time, were now at his Death impatient to know what was become of him; and therefore as soon as their Sabbath was over, which was the next day after his Death, and nothing but the devout Observation of the Sabbath could have kept them so long from the Sepulchre; I say, as soon as that was over, on the first Day of the

the Week, which was next Morning, *Mary Magdalen very early, and when it was yet dark*, that is, before Sun-rising, ran before the rest, and with a Valour more than a Woman's, came very soon to the Sepulchre: for which reason (as some tell us) she had the Honour of the first sight of him; for St. *Mark* declares, that *he appeared first to* Mary Magdalen, *Chap.* 16. 9. St. *John* here intimates, that she came alone, and saw the great Stone, that was roll'd at the Door of the Sepulchre, taken away, and looking in, found the Body likewise taken from thence; at which being surpriz'd with Wonder and Grief, *she ran and came to* Simon Peter, *and to the other Disciple whom Jesus loved*, that is, *John*, between whom and *Peter* there was a more dear and particular Friendship; and, with great Concern, *said unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the Sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him*; for the Monument is thrown open, and no body found there.

Upon the hearing of this sad News, Peter *went forth, and that other Disciple, and came to the Sepulchre.* They hasten'd away with all speed to the Place, the better to inform themselves and others of the Truth of this Matter; *so they ran both together*, but *the other Disciple* John, being much the younger, *did outrun* Peter, *and came first to the Sepulchre*; where he stooped down, and looked into the Monument, and *saw the Linen Clothes lying*, but he proceeded no farther, and *went not in*, till *Peter* came up to him, who presently, according to his usual Forwardness, went into the Sepulchre, and there saw the Linen Clothes lie, and the Napkin that was about his Head not lying with the Linen Clothes, but decently wrap'd up, and laid in a place by it self. After which, St. *John*, the other Disciple that came first to the Sepulchre, went in also, where he saw the Night-clothes and other Linen orderly folded up and plac'd, like one newly come out of Bed; whereupon the Evangelist tells us, *He saw and believed*; that is, he began then to have some Thoughts of what our Saviour had so often foretold, namely, his Resurrection; of which before they had little or no Knowledg, for the next words declare, that *as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the Dead.* And therefore we find our Saviour checking the Backwardness of their Faith in this Particular, saying, *O Fools, and slow of Heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken! ought not Christ to have suffer'd these things, and to enter into his Glory?* And beginning at *Moses* and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning

concerning himſelf, *Luke* 24. 25, 26. The Apoſtles themſelves were a little tainted with that Vanity of the *Jews*, in expecting a pompous and victorious Meſſias; for when Chriſt at any time diſcours'd before them of his Sufferings, they were generally ſtumbled and offended at it: *Let that be far from thee, Lord* (ſaith St. *Peter*) *that ſhall not happen unto thee*; when he talked of his going up to *Jeruſalem*, and there ſuffering many things of the Chief Prieſts and Elders, of being kill'd, and rais'd again the third Day; *Mat.* 16. 21, 22. Yea, after his Death we find them muttering, We thought it had been he that ſhould have reſtor'd the Kingdom unto *Iſrael*: which ſhews that they deſponded at his Death, and deſpair'd of his Reſurrection; for neither *Mary Magdalen*, nor the other Diſciples, tho they found the Body taken away, did preſently believe that he was come to Life again, but that it was taken from that honourable Sepulchre, in which it was laid, and carry'd to a meaner or worſe place: for we read here, that as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he muſt riſe again. And St. *Mark* tells us, that after all this that they had ſeen and heard, they believed not, *Mark* 16. 11, 12, 13. And ſo *the Diſciples went away again unto their own home*; that is, they ſtay'd no longer here at the Sepulchre, where was no more to be ſeen, for fear of Danger, but repair'd haſtily to their own Houſes, much wondring (ſaith St. *Luke*) at that which was come to paſs.

But tho all the reſt went their way, yet *Mary Magdalen* ſtay'd behind, and *ſtood ſtill at the Sepulchre weeping*; 'tis ſaid of this *Mary* in another place, that *ſhe loved much*: and by this it appear'd ſhe did ſo; for ſhe was the laſt at his Croſs, and the firſt at his Grave, and ſtay'd longeſt at both, when all the reſt left him, and went away. She ſtay'd there weeping for him; her great Concern for his Body drew Tears from her, who dearly loved him both living and dead: When Chriſt *ſtood at* Lazarus's *Grave and wept*, the *Jews* ſaid, *See how he loved him!* John 11. 36. And the ſame may be ſaid here, when *Mary* ſtood by Chriſt's Grave and wept, See how ſhe loved him! Her Love made her ſorrowful and reſtleſs till ſhe had paid the laſt Office of Duty and Service to his dead Body, by embalming it with Spices, and beſtowing the Preparations ſhe had made upon it.

But *as ſhe wept, ſhe ſtooped down, and looked into the Sepulchre*: Her Affection and Curioſity would not ſuffer her to be quiet, without making the utmoſt Search and Scrutiny after him; and as ſhe looked, ſhe ſaw two Angels in white ſhining Garments,

Garments, ſitting one at the Head, the other at the Feet of the Tomb, where the Body of Jeſus had lain. And here we find the Fathers deſcanting on this Viſion: Angels in the Grave (ſaith one) was a ſtrange Sight, and ſuch as was never ſeen before: Heaven is the Seat of thoſe glorious Creatures, but the Grave is no place for Angels, but rather for Worms; but Chriſt's Sacred Body had been there, and that conſecrated the Place; his Preſence is able to bleſs any Poſt, and bleſſed muſt the Place be where the Lord lay. This made ſuch a bleſſed Change in the State of that Place, as made St. *Auſtin* cry out, *Quid glorioſius Angelo, quid vilius Vermiculo?* What more glorious than an Angel, what more vile than a Worm? And yet, *Qui fuit Vermiculorum locus eſt & Angelorum*; That which was the place for Worms, is become a place for Angels.

But what was the Meſſage or Errand of theſe Angels here? Why, to honour Chriſt's Reſurrection, as they had before his Nativity, to comfort the Diſciples, and to increaſe the Joy of that Solemnity. Accordingly, *Mary* looking again into the Sepulchre with Tears and Grief, for ſhe yet knew him not to be alive, the Angels ſaid unto her, *Woman, why weepeſt thou?* She ſaith unto them, *Becauſe they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him*: Cauſe enough, ſhe thought, for the deepeſt Mourning and Sorrow; for ſhe had loſt her Lord, whom ſhe lov'd above all things, and that not only by taking away his Life, but by taking away his dead Body too, which ſhe came to anoint, and do her laſt Office to; and which was worſe, they had carry'd him away ſhe knew not whither, without any hopes of finding or fetching him again: *I know not* (ſaith ſhe) *where they have laid him.*

But when ſhe had thus ſaid, hearing ſomebody behind her, ſhe turn'd her ſelf about, and ſaw Jeſus ſtanding, but knew not that it was he. Her Tears had ſo dimm'd her Sight, that ſhe could not well diſcern Things or Perſons, eſpecially being early in the Morning too. The Perſon ſhe took him for was the Gardiner, who dreſs'd the Garden, where the Sepulchre was: And a Gardiner indeed he was (ſaith a Father upon the Place) one that made ſuch an Herb grow out of the Ground this Day, as was never ſeen before, a dead Body to ſhoot forth alive out of the Grave. This Gardiner finding *Mary* ſtill in Tears, not yet knowing that he was riſen, ſaid unto her, *Woman, why weepeſt thou? whom ſeekeſt thou?* She taking him for the Gardiner, and thinking he might remove the Body from that coſtly Tomb, and diſpoſe of it elſewhere, reply'd to him, *Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where*

thou

thou haſt laid him, and I will take him away; where ſhe ſhews her great care about the Body, requeſting that, if poſſible, ſhe might have it to provide for it another Burying-place, and none ſhould be any farther moleſted by it.

Our Lord, hearing her paſſionate Expreſſions, and in a manner overcome by the Ardency of her Affection and Concern for him, could refrain no longer; but ſhewing himſelf in his own Likeneſs, graciouſly ſpake to her, calling her by her own Name: at which turning about, ſhe then knew both his Perſon and Voice, and being raviſh'd with Joy, ſaid unto him, *Rabboni*, that is to ſay, Maſter, falling down proſtrate to adore him, and kiſs his Feet; but Chriſt forbad thoſe things at preſent, and entertain'd her with Diſcourſes of his ſpeedy aſcending and going to his Father, willing her to go forthwith to his Brethren or Diſciples, and to tell them, that his Reſurrection was accompliſh'd, and that he was ſhortly to aſcend to his Father, and now, by the Merit of his Paſſion, their Father likewiſe, who was thereby become their God as well as his. And having ſpoke theſe things to her, he ſuddenly diſappear'd and went from her, who was no doubt over-joy'd at the ſight of him, and not a little afflicted with his ſo ſudden Departure. However, ſhe immediately haſted away to carry the News to the Diſciples, telling them, that ſhe had ſeen the Lord, and what things he had ſpoken unto her.

And now we are come to the ſeveral Appearances he made, to confirm them and us in the Truth of his Reſurrection, the great thing we remember and commemorate this Day.

The firſt whereof was, we ſee, to *Mary Magdalen*, who for loving much had this great Honour and Favour ſhew'd her, to have the firſt ſight of him after he roſe from the Dead; as we read *Mark* 16.

The other Appearances he made after are recited by St. *Paul* in 1 *Cor.* 15. 5, 6, &c. where he tells us, he was ſeen firſt of *Cephas*, that is, of *Peter*, who was firſt call'd *Simon*, and after *Cephas*, and then *Peter*; which ſignifies a Rock, becauſe upon his Confeſſion, as upon a Rock, the Church was built: and perhaps for that among other Reaſons (tho *Mary Magdalen* was before him) his firſt Appearance to the Apoſtles was made to him. So St. *Luke* likewiſe tells us, *Chap.* 24. 34. And this Apparition, ſome think, might be at his Return from the Sepulchre, whilſt *John*, as ſwifter of foot, was then alſo gone before him, to tell the ſtrange and joyful News. However that be, his

Next Appearance was to the Twelve Apostles, of which St. *John* informs us in this Chapter, *ver.* 19, 20. where we read that when the Disciples were assembled, and for fear of the *Jews* had shut the Doors, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, saying, *All hail, or Peace be unto you.* And lest they should take him for a Ghost or Spectre, that assum'd a Body, therein to appear for awhile, and then vanish away, he *shewed unto them his Hands and his Side:* St. *Luke* adds, that he bid them *handle him, and see him, for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones, as ye see me have*; Chap. 24. 39. And because they yet doubted the Reality of his Body, he call'd for Meat, and when they gave him a piece of a broiled Fish, and a Hony-Comb, he ate it before them: so far did he condescend for their Satisfaction. But because one of the Apostles, namely *Thomas*, was wanting at this Meeting, they went and acquainted him with this Matter; but he being more than ordinarily distrustful, when they told him that they had seen the Lord, reply'd to them, "That except I shall see in his Hands the "Print of the Nails that fasten'd him to the Cross, and put "my Finger into the Holes of the Nails, and thrust my Hand "into his Side, which the Soldier's Spear had pierc'd," he would not believe it was he. Hereupon after eight Days, when the Disciples were met again, and *Thomas* with them, Jesus came, the Doors being shut, and stood in the midst of them, saying as before, *Peace be unto you:* and seeing *Thomas*, saith unto him, *Reach hither thy Finger, and behold my Hands*; and *reach hither thy Hand, and thrust it into my Side; and be not faithless, but believing.* Whereupon *Thomas* answer'd and said, *My Lord, my God*; meaning, that he acknowledg'd him for his very Lord and Master, and was satisfy'd of his Divine Power, in raising himself from the Dead.

After this, St. *Paul* tells us, that he was seen of above five hundred Brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain'd alive to his time, tho some were fallen asleep. Now these were the People of *Galilee*, mention'd *Mat.* 28. 7, 10. to whom Christ appear'd soon after his Resurrection.

But to go on, the Apostle tells us, that after this he was seen of *James*, our Lord's Brother, to whom he made a particular Appearance, and constituted him Bishop of *Jerusalem*; and then to all the Apostles together. And,

Lastly, St. *Paul* adds, that *he was seen of him too, as of one born out of due time*; meaning, that tho he knew not our Saviour before his ascending into Heaven, and so could not see him in the Flesh, as the other Apostles did; yet after his Ascension

he ſaw him in a Viſion, when being converted by him, he vouchſafed to ſpeak to him by a Voice from Heaven, and exhibited himſelf to his ſight, and receiv'd him thro his ſpecial Grace and Favour into the Number of his Apoſtles.

Theſe were ſome of the principal Appearances that Chriſt made of himſelf after he roſe from the Dead; whereby he abundantly confirm'd the Truth, and eſtabliſh'd his Followers in the Faith of his Reſurrection. And now let us briefly ſum up the Evidence given in this Matter, and conſider,

1*ſt*, The Number of the Witneſſes that ſaw and convers'd with him, which amount to many Hundreds, I might ſay many Thouſands: And if out of the Mouth of two or three Witneſſes every Word ſhall be eſtabliſh'd, upon how firm a Foundation muſt this Truth ſtand, which proceeded out of the Mouths of ſo many? Again,

2*dly*, Theſe Witneſſes were not a few credulous Perſons that were eaſy of Belief, and might be perſuaded to receive it upon any ſlight Grounds, but were Perſons poſſeſs'd with mighty Doubts, and look'd upon the firſt Report of it to be no better than *an idle Tale*; which made them go and look into the Grave, and to examine the whole Matter with the ſtricteſt and moſt impartial Scrutiny: and *Thomas* above the reſt was ſo diſtruſtful, that he declar'd, that without ocular and ſenſible Demonſtration he neither could nor would believe it. And yet,

3*dly*, Theſe Perſons had all their Doubts remov'd, and receiv'd all that Satisfaction which Infidelity and Diſtruſt it ſelf could deſire; yea, *Thomas* himſelf had thoſe palpable Proofs of the Eye, the Ear, and the Hand, that made him break out into the ampleſt Acknowledgment and Adoration of him. Moreover,

4*thly*, Theſe Perſons, ſo fully convinc'd, publiſh'd this Truth every where with the greateſt Boldneſs; inſomuch that no Threats or Puniſhments could daunt their Courage in the Delivery of it: And all this without any the leaſt Appearance of worldly Intereſt, yea to the manifeſt hazard of their Lives and Fortunes. No Bonds or Impriſonments, no nor yet Death it ſelf could make them ſtiffe or diſown this Truth, which they had in Commiſſion to deliver; as you may read at large in the *Acts of the Apoſtles*.

To all which we may add, in the laſt place, the mighty Credit that this Truth hath gain'd ever ſince; Perſons of all Times, Ages and Places being proſelyted to the Belief of it. Tho great Endeavours have been us'd to ſuppreſs it; yet the unde-

undeniable Evidence of it hath baffled all Attempts of that kind, made it spread and prevail the more, and to triumph over all Opposition.

And now put all these things together, and we may plainly see the undoubted Truth and Certainty of Christ's Resurrection, and that no Matter of Fact even was or can be more fully prov'd. From whence, by way of Application, we may infer these two things:

(1.) To establish our Minds in a stedfast Faith of our Lord's Resurrection; for this is the great bearing Article that supports and confirms all the rest. *If Christ be not risen* (saith the Apostle) *then is our Preaching vain, and your Faith is also vain*; but Christ, you see, is risen, and by many infallible Proofs found alive, and therefore all is sound and good: Let us therefore continue stedfast in this Faith; and the rather, because there have been found some in all Ages, who have labour'd hard to shake and undermine it. In the Apostles Days there were some, among whom were *Hymeneus* and *Philetus*, who affirm'd the Resurrection to be past already, and thereby shak'd the Faith of many: there were others, among whom were the *Sadducees*, who flatly deny'd the Resurrection; of whom St. *Paul* speaks, *If Christ be risen from the Dead, how say some among you, that there is no Resurrection?* 1 Cor. 15. And there are some in our Days, who would have it thought a thing incredible that God should raise the Dead. Let us therefore arm our selves with the Shield of Faith against all such Seducers; and by frequent considering the Scriptures, and the Power of God, we may be daily built up more and more in this Holy Faith.

(2.) From what hath been said, let us learn to conform to Christ's Resurrection, by rising again unto Newness of Life. This is the Use St. *Paul* would have us to make of it, in the sixth Chapter to the *Romans*, to frame our selves and Actions to the Likeness of his Resurrection: which we are to imitate,

1*st*, By rising speedily from the Death of Sin; for as Christ would not defer his Resurrection, but made haste to arise, as soon as he had fulfil'd the Prophecies concerning himself, so should we make haste, and delay not the time to awake out of this spiritual Slumber, and be quickened into a Life of Grace. Every minute now is too long to continue in our Sins, and we cannot be too early in our Preparations for a better Resurrection.

2*dly*, We ſhould imitate him, by riſing fully and compleatly from the Death of Sin; that as Chriſt left all the Linen Clothes, Napkins and other Furniture of a dead Corps behind him in the Grave; ſo ſhould we perfectly rid our ſelves of the whole Body of Sin, with all its Appurtenances, not ſuffering any to remain about us, but caſting off the very Garments ſpotted with the Fleſh, and avoiding all the Occaſions and Appearances of Evil.

3*dly*, We muſt conform to Chriſt's Reſurrection, by returning no more to our former Courſes: for as Chriſt being rais'd from the Dead, dies no more, Death having no more Dominion over him; ſo we having died unto Sin once, ſhould live no longer therein: Sin muſt no longer reign in our mortal Bodies to fulfil the Luſt thereof; our Duty and Wiſdom is ſo to riſe with Chriſt, as to return no more to Folly. This is the beſt way of obſerving *Eaſter*; and if we reſolve and continue ſo to do, we ſhall keep this Feaſt to good purpoſe: for by thus having our Fruit unto Holineſs, the End will be everlaſting Life. Which God grant, *&c.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE LXIV.

The EPISTLE for *Eaſter-Monday.*

Acts x. 34——43.

Peter *opened his Mouth and ſaid, Of a truth I perceive that God is no Reſpecter of Perſons; but in every Nation he that feareth him, and worketh Righteouſneſs, is accepted with him. The Word which God ſent unto the Children of* Iſrael, *preaching Peace by Jeſus Chriſt, he is Lord of all; that Word, ye know, which was publiſhed throughout all* Judea *and* Galilee *after the Baptiſm of* John, *&c.*

THE occaſion of theſe Words, which are ſelected for the Epiſtle for this Day, was from a heavenly Viſion made to St. *Peter*, concerning the calling in and receiving the *Gentiles* into the Chriſtian Church. An Account of this Viſion we have in the ninth and following Verſes of this Chapter; where *Peter*, by a ſymbolical Repreſentation from Heaven, was admoniſh'd not to look upon the *Gentiles* as common or unclean, but freely to eat, and drink, and converſe with them as Brethren, and Members of the ſame Society. St. *Peter* was at firſt ſurpriz'd with Wonder and Aſtoniſhment at the Strangeneſs of the Meſſage, *knowing it to be unlawful*, by the *Jewiſh* Religion, *for one that was a* Jew *to keep Company, or come unto one of another Nation.* Nevertheleſs, God having warned him not to call any Man common or unclean, he was not diſobedient to the heavenly Viſion; in which he was the more confirm'd by three Meſſengers then knocking at his Door, and enquiring for him; from whom he receiv'd this Account, *viz.*

That *Cornelius* a Centurion, of the *Italian* Band, a devout Man, one that feared God, and gave much Alms unto the People, had, by an immediate Command from God, ſent for

him, to let him know what he ought to do: *Peter* at the ſame time had a Revelation, that theſe Perſons were ſent to him by God for that purpoſe; and therefore doubting nothing, he ſhould ariſe and go down with them. Accordingly St. *Peter* the next Morning went along with them to *Ceſarea*; where *Cornelius* with ſome of his Friends meeting him, *fell down at his Feet, and worſhipped him*; but *Peter* took him up, ſaying, *Stand up, for I alſo am a Man*, and cannot receive the Honour that is due to God only. And then entring into his Houſe, ſaid unto him, that tho hitherto it had not been lawful for the Jews to converſe familiarly with the *Gentiles*, yet now God had taught him another Leſſon, and ſo proceeded to enquire more particularly for what Intent he had ſent for him. Whereupon *Cornelius* ſpake theſe words unto him; *Four days ago I was faſting until this hour, and about the ninth hour I prayed in my Houſe*, which were the hours of Faſting and Prayer; *and behold a Man* (or an Angel in the Shape of a Man) *ſtood before me in bright Clothing, and ſaid*, Cornelius, *thy Prayers are heard, and thine Alms are had in Remembrance in the ſight of God: Send therefore to* Joppa, *and call hither* Simon, *who is ſirnamed* Peter; *he is lodged at the Houſe of one* Simon *a Tanner by the Sea-ſide, who when he cometh ſhall ſpeak unto thee*, and make known more of my Mind. But here it may be ask'd,

Why did not the Angel declare the whole of this Affair to *Cornelius*, but order him to ſend about Meſſengers to *Peter*, to acquaint him with it, and reveal this Myſtery to the World? Why, this was done for two weighty Reaſons:

1ſt, For the Honour of God's Miniſters, whom he had appointed Stewards and Diſpenſers of the Myſteries of the Kingdom of Heaven; which Honour he reſerv'd and confin'd to them, leſt they ſhould be otherwiſe too much vilify'd and contemn'd by a wicked World. And,

2dly, This was done to let us know, that we are not to expect any extraordinary Ways of Teaching and Information, where ordinary Means are afforded ſufficient for that purpoſe; for which Reaſons the Angel acquainted not *Cornelius* with the whole of this Matter, but directed him to the Apoſtle for farther Inſtruction in it. *Peter* then being by God Almighty's Order come to *Cornelius*'s Houſe, and finding him a Perſon of great Piety and Religion, tho a *Gentile*, yet willing to become a Chriſtian, and ready to hear what he had from God to ſay unto him, began his Diſcourſe with the Words appointed for the Epiſtle for this Day.

Then

Then Peter *opened his Mouth, and ſaid*; he whoſe Mouth ſeem'd before ſhut, and his Mind taken up with a ſilent Admiration at this new and ſtrange Diſpenſation, now opens and breaks forth into theſe words: *Of a truth I perceive that God is no Reſpecter of Perſons, but in every Nation he that feareth him, and worketh Righteouſneſs, is accepted with him*: where, by a true and impartial weighing of Matters, it appear'd plain and evident to him, that God judges not of Perſons by any outward Reſpects of Country or Nation, Sect or Condition; but by the inward Purity of the Heart, and Piety of their Works: He regards no Man above another merely becauſe he is a *Jew*, or deſcended from the Stock of *Abraham*; nor does he accept the Perſons of Men for any external Privileges or Prerogatives; but 'tis the fearing of God, and doing what is righteous in his ſight, that alone recommends us to him. The devout and pious Perſon, the righteous and good Man, is equally dear to Heaven wherever he be; he reſpects the vertuous and upright Man as well in the Wilds of *Scythia*, as upon Mount *Zion*, and makes no difference upon the account of the Climate or Country.

The Partition-wall, that ſeparated between the *Jew* and the *Gentile*, is now broken down, all Names of Diſtinction are to be laid aſide, and are all ſwallow'd up in that of Chriſtian; inſomuch that now *there is neither* Jew *nor* Greek, *Bond or Free, Male or Female*; *for they are all one in Chriſt Jeſus*. God accepts none for the outward Circumſtances or Quality of the Perſon, but for the inward Temper of the Mind: he looks not as Man looks, to the outward Appearance, but beholds the Heart, and accepts or rejects according to the good or evil Bent and Inclination of that.

And this may teach us to avoid all Partiality, and to judg of things not by any external Advantages or Appearances, but by the internal Merits or Demerits of the Perſon. And from Chriſt's uniting both *Jew* and *Gentile* into the one Body of his Church, and receiving Perſons of all Nations, Sexes and Countries into it, we may learn to avoid all Factions and Diviſions, and to *endeavour to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*; that there may be no Schiſm in the myſtical Body of Chriſt, but all the Members may *join together in the ſame Mind, and the ſame Judgment*.

But to go on: *Peter* and *Cornelius* having by Viſions and Directions from Heaven made known the happy Union and Conjunction of the *Jews* and *Gentiles* into one Body of the Chriſtian Church; the Apoſtle proceeds to inſtruct *Cornelius*

and the other *Gentiles* in the Myſteries of the Goſpel, and the Principles of the Chriſtian Religion, of which they had heard ſomething, and ſo had ſome imperfect Knowledg; as appears by what follows.

The Word (ſaith he) *which was ſent to the People of* Iſrael, *preaching Peace by Jeſus Chriſt, who is Lord of all; that Word* (ſaith he) *ye know, which was publiſhed throughout all* Judea *and* Galilee, *after the Baptiſm which* John *preached*: meaning, that the reconciling and making Peace between God and Man by Jeſus Chriſt, was a Doctrine declar'd by the Prophets of old, and ſince publiſh'd by St. *John* in all the Regions round about, of which they could not be altogether ignorant. From this general Account of the Chriſtian Doctrine, he deſcends to Particulars, telling them, *How God anointed Jeſus of* Nazareth *with the Holy Ghoſt, and with Power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppreſſed of the Devil: for God was with him.*

Anointing in Scripture was an antient Ceremony of Conſecration, and ſignify'd the ſetting apart or ordaining any to ſome ſpecial Uſe or Office; and this was us'd to Things as well as Perſons. Jacob *powred Oil on the Top of a Pillar*, and thereby conſecrated it as Holy unto the Lord; *Gen.* 28. 18. *Moſes* anointed the Tabernacle, and the Veſſels belonging to it, and thereby dedicated them to Holy Uſes: But the principal Anointing refer'd to Perſons, who were by that Ceremony ſet apart and conſecrated to ſome High and Holy Office. Thus Kings, and Prieſts, and Prophets were wont to be anointed and ſet apart to their ſeveral Functions: *Saul* was anointed King of *Iſrael*, and ſo was *David* and *Solomon*, and all the ſucceeding Kings of *Iſrael* and *Judah*: which Ceremony continues at the Inauguration of Princes to this day. The Prophets likewiſe were anointed with Oil, as a Token of Conſecration to their Holy Office. Accordingly *Peter* here tells them, that Chriſt, who was both King, and Prieſt, and Prophet to his Church, was *anointed with the Oil of Gladneſs above his Fellows*; having a more plentiful Effuſion of it, than was ever beſtow'd on any other: for *God anointed this Jeſus of* Nazareth *with the Holy Ghoſt, and with Power*; that is, with a liberal Portion of the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit, with a Power of working Miracles to qualify him for the Office of Mediator. And being thus furniſh'd with a double Portion of the Spirit, and receiving the Gifts and Graces of it in the higheſt meaſure, *he went about doing good* both to the Bodies and Souls of Men, ſeeking out Opportunities of

ſhewing

ſhewing Mercy and Pity, curing all manner of Diſeaſes, making the Lame to walk, the Blind to ſee, and the Deaf to hear, cleanſing the Lepers, raiſing the Dead, caſting out evil Spirits, and healing all that were poſſeſs'd or oppreſs'd of the Devil: *for God was with him*, to bleſs, proſper and reward him.

That they might not doubt of theſe great Truths, he tells them, that *we his Apoſtles are witneſſes of all theſe things, which he did both in the Land of the* Jews, *and in* Jeruſalem; which were ſo publickly known, and in the Mouths of ſo many, that they could not be wholly Strangers to them.

Moreover, he acquaints them with the Way and Manner, how this great Work of Man's Salvation was accompliſh'd; and that was by the Paſſion and Reſurrection of the Son of God: for *he whom the* Jews *ſlew and hanged on a Tree, him God raiſed up the third Day.* He by dying underwent the Puniſhment due to our Sin; and by the *Jews* ſlaying and hanging him on a Tree, fulfilled the Prophecies concerning the manner of his Death: and by both ſatisfy'd Divine Juſtice, and *redeemed us from the Curſe of the Law, being made a Curſe for us; for as many as were under the Law, were under the Curſe, as it is written, Curſed is every one that continueth not in every thing that is written in the Book of the Law to do it.* And becauſe we had all broken the Law, he was nail'd to the curſed Tree, to remove the Curſe from us; as it is written, *Curſed is every one that hangeth on a Tree.*

Now this ſame Jeſus (ſaith he) whom they crucify'd, *God raiſed up the third Day*; and by releaſing him from the Priſon of the Grave, ſhew'd that our Debt was ſatisfy'd, and that it ſhould not long detain our mortal Bodies: for by his Death he hath pluck'd out the Sting of Death, and by his Riſing again hath rais'd us to Glory and Immortality.

To confirm them in the ſtedfaſt Belief of his Reſurrection, he tells them, that *God ſhewed him openly*; he expos'd him to publick View, and caus'd him to appear, *not indeed to all the People*, to make it an idle Rumour, *but to Witneſſes choſen before of God.* This Manifeſtation was not made to the whole Body of the *Jews*, who wilfully rejected him, but to ſome Perſons ſelected for that purpoſe, and thoſe were his Apoſtles and Diſciples; whom, as he made choice of as the peculiar Witneſſes of his Miracles and all that he did when he was alive, ſo did he more eſpecially ſingle them out by God's Appointment to be the Witneſſes of his Reſurrection: to which end, he admitted them to eat and drink with them; for *when*

they

they gave him a piece of a broiled Fish, and of an Hony-Comb, he took it, and did eat before them after he aroſe from the Dead: *Luke* 24. 42.

Beſide, he gave them many infallible Proofs and Signs that he roſe in the ſame Body in which he died; for when he made his firſt Appearance to his Diſciples, 'tis ſaid they were terrify'd and affrighted, as if they had ſeen a Spirit: but our Saviour, to remove all their Doubts and Fears, ſhew'd them the Holes made in his Hands and Feet by the Nails that faſten'd him to the Croſs, and took St. *Thomas*'s Hand, and thruſt it into the Hole made in his Side by the Soldier's Spear: by which they plainly ſaw that it was he, and ſo were *no longer faithleſs, but believing*; calling him, *My Lord and my God.*

And having thus clearly convinc'd them of the Truth and Reality of his Reſurrection, *he commanded them to preach it every where unto the People, and to teſtify, that it is he who was ordained of God to be the Judg of Quick and Dead.* So he tells them himſelf, *Mat.* 28. 18, &c. *ſaying, All Power is given unto me in Heaven, and in Earth: Go ye therefore and teach all Nations, and baptize them in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt, teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you*: and particularly to proclaim to the World, that Chriſt crucify'd is rais'd to God's right Hand, to be the Judg of all that die before, or are found alive at the Day of Doom.

This Power was given him as a Reward for his Sufferings, and a Recompence for all that he hath done for Man's Salvation, that he may puniſh thoſe Unbelievers that refuſe the Tenders of his Mercy, and exalt thoſe to Honour that believe and receive the Terms of Reconciliation: To which ends the Apoſtle tells us, that *God hath appointed a Day wherein he will judg the World in Righteouſneſs by that Man whom he hath ordained; of which he hath given Aſſurance, in that he raiſed him from the Dead.*

And elſewhere; *We muſt all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*; 2 Cor. 5. 10. Chriſt then was rais'd to be the Judg of all the World, to the great Comfort of all good Men, and the Terror of the bad: *To him give all the Prophets witneſs*; meaning, that this is he of whom the Prophets foretold thoſe things, and in whom the Apoſtles declare that they are all fulfilled: *That thro his Name, whoſoever believeth in him ſhall receive Remiſſion of Sins.* Where reference is had to that New Cove-

nant,

nant, which Christ, by the Merits of his Death, and Virtue of his Resurrection, purchas'd of his Father, and enter'd into with us: the Conditions whereof are Faith and Repentance; which if we perform on our part, we may rest assur'd, that whatever our Sins are, tho many and great, they shall be forgiven us of our heavenly Father, who is well pleas'd in his beloved Son, and with us too in and thro him. Which great Actions of his, in our stead, and for our sake, ought never to be forgotten, but still to be remember'd by us at the proper Seasons, and in the due Manner that he himself hath appointed: Which God grant, for the Merits of him who hath accomplish'd all this for us; to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all Honour and Glory now and for evermore. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE LXV.

The GOSPEL for *Easter-Monday.*

St. Luke xxiv. 13——36.

Behold, two of his Disciples went that same Day to a Village called Emmaus, *which was from* Jerusalem *about threescore Furlongs: And they talked together of all these things that had happened. And it came to pass, that while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them; but their Eyes were holden, that they should not know him,* &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day contains an Account of a Conference held between two Disciples concerning Christ and his Resurrection; at which Conference Jesus came *incognito*, and join'd himself to their Company, tho they knew him not, till after some time he discover'd himself to them, and confirm'd them in the Certainty of what they before doubted, *viz.* that he was indeed risen from the Dead.

The

The Account of it begins with these words; *Behold, two of his Disciples went that same day to a Village called* Emmaus, *&c.* where we have the Persons, the Time, the Place, and other Circumstances relating to this Affair.

For the Persons concern'd in it, they were two of Christ's Disciples: who they were, is not here particularly mention'd, nor indeed in any other of the Evangelists; but 'tis suppos'd they were *Peter* and *John*, who both went to the Sepulchre where our Saviour was laid, and finding not the Body of Jesus, and beholding nothing but the Linen Clothes wrapt up and laid together by themselves, they departed and went their way, wondring in themselves at what was come to pass. However, 'tis thought they met again

The same Day, that is, the Day of his Resurrection, or the Time on which he rose: at which time they travelled together *to a Village called* Emmaus, *that was from* Jerusalem *about threescore Furlongs*; which, computing eight Furlongs to a Mile, was about seven Miles distant from *Jerusalem*. In the way as they went, *they talked together of all these things which had happened*; which was then, no doubt, the publick Discourse in every one's Mouth: the News of his Resurrection being openly declar'd and told about by Mary Magdalen, *and* Joanna, *and* Mary *the Mother of* James, *and other Women with them*, who were early in the Morning at the Sepulchre, and seeking the Body of Christ, were told by *two Men in shining Garments*, that is, by two Angels in human Shape, that *he was not there, for he was risen*, pointing to the Place where the Lord lay: which thing being thus noised abroad, occasion'd these Disciples conferring and talking about it; in which they shew'd something of Faith, tho but weak and imperfect, and mingled with many Doubtings: yea, some of the Apostles look'd upon the Report of the Women but *as idle Tales, and believed them not*, ver. 11. But these Disciples had some better Thoughts of it, tho not without some Misgivings.

And it came to pass, that while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. Our Saviour perceiving the Weakness, and withal the Sincerity of their Faith, and that they were very willing to find out the Truth of this Matter, join'd himself with them, to hear and direct their Reasoning, but yet so as not presently to make himself known unto them; for 'tis said, *Their Eyes were holden, that they should not know him.* Their Eyes were either dazzled by a Divine Power, or some other way hinder'd from discerning

discerning who or what he was; as it happened to *Mary Magdalen*, who *saw Jesus standing, but knew not it was he*, John 20. 14. And so it was with the Disciples, Peter, *and* Thomas, *and* Nathaniel, *and two others*, who saw Jesus *standing on the Shore, but knew not that it was Jesus*, John 21. 4. that is, he was either so disguis'd, that they could not see thro it, or their Eyes were so held by God's Power or Pleasure, that tho they saw a Man, yet they could not discern who it was. This was the Case of these two Disciples; our Saviour Christ struck in as a Stranger into their Company, and industriously conceal'd himself, partly to prevent Surprize, and partly to prepare them for, and gain the more upon them by a gradual revealing himself unto them.

As they went on their way, our Saviour perceiving them to be not a little troubled or dismay'd, *said unto them, What manner of Communications are these, that you have one to another, as ye walk and are sad?* where he enquires into the Cause or Occasion of their Sadness, or what it was that thus troubled them. To whom one of them, nam'd *Cleophas*, reply'd, *Art thou only a Stranger in* Jerusalem, *and hast not known the things that are come to pass there in these days?* This *Cleophas* is suppos'd to be the Brother of *Joseph*, the Virgin *Mary*'s Husband, and so the reputed Uncle of Christ: he wondring at this Stranger's Ignorance in Matters so generally known and talk'd of every where, asking what those things were, they answer'd him, *Concerning Jesus of* Nazareth, *a Prophet mighty in Deed and Word before God and all the People*; one whose Doctrine and Miracles plainly shew'd him to be a Divine Person, or an extraordinary Teacher come from God; for none could do the Works that he did, except God were with him. And yet this heavenly and excellent Person, so approv'd of God, and applauded of all the People, met with the most barbarous and inhuman Treatment from the World of any Person in it; for *the Chief Priests and Rulers delivered him to* Pontius Pilate, the *Roman* Governour, *to be condemned to Death:* and tho he could find no fault in him, yet pass'd Sentence upon him, and yielded him up to be *crucified*; which hath occasion'd great Sorrow and Sadness to all his Followers: for *we trusted* (say they) *that it had been he who should have redeemed* Israel; that is, we look'd upon him as the true promis'd Messias, that should restore again the Kingdom to *Israel*, and deliver us from all our Enemies. The Greatness of his Works, and the Goodness of his Sayings were both such, as to raise our Expectations, and made us fix both our Eyes and Hearts upon him, as the Redeemer

deemer of *Iſrael*. But alas! his Death hath cut off all our Hopes, and left us nothing but Diſappointment and Deſpair. Here the Faith of the Apoſtles ſeem'd to fail them, and their Hopes to be wholly extinguiſh'd: and this, thro the Prevalency of Temptation, may ſometimes happen to the beſt of Men. Our Saviour pray'd for St. *Peter*, that his Faith might not fail, which was in great danger from the Siftings of Satan, and the Trials of the World. And the Apoſtle cautions every one, that *thinks that he ſtandeth, to take heed leſt he fall*: And elſewhere, *Thou ſtandeſt by Faith, but be not high-minded, but fear*; preſume not too much upon thy own Strength, but call in the Aſſiſtance of Heaven, by making thy Requeſt known unto God.

But that which moſt ſtagger'd the Faith of the Diſciples, was, that *beſide all this, that was the third Day after his Death*, on which he told them of his riſing again; of which having no Tidings, they were almoſt ready to give up all for loſt.

But whilſt they were uttering this deſpairing Language, *Certain Women* (ſay they) *that were of our Company made us aſtoniſhed; who being early that Morning at the Sepulchre*, ſpake many ſtrange and wonderful things, ſaying unto us, that when looking into the Sepulchre *they found not the Body of Jeſus, a Viſion of Angels appeared to them, which ſaid, that he was alive:* whereupon certain of them who were with them went to the Sepulchre, and found *it even as the Women had ſaid, but him they ſaw not*. Now here our Lord began to make ſome Diſcovery of himſelf to them; which he did by reaſoning the Matter with them with ſome kind of Smartneſs, ſharply rebuking the Slowneſs and Backwardneſs of their Faith, and ſaying unto them, *O Fools, and ſlow of Heart to believe all that the Prophets have ſpoken! Ought not Chriſt to have ſuffer'd theſe things, and to enter into his Glory?* Were not all theſe Sufferings of the Meſſias, at which you ſeem to ſtumble, plainly foretold by the Prophets of old? *And beginning at* Moſes *and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himſelf:* letting them know, that *Moſes* ſpake of *a great Prophet*, that ſhould come in the latter Days, and reveal to them the whole Will of God; and that *Iſaias* foretold, that this Perſon ſhould *be deſpiſed and rejected of Men, and be brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter*: That *Daniel* propheſy'd, that the *Meſſiah was to be cut off for the Sins of the People*. And how *David* and *Zacharias* foretold the Manner of it; the one ſaying, *They pierced my Hands*

Hands and my Feet; the other, *They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn over him*: both which Prophecies relate to his Crucifixion.

These and many other Scriptures he expounded to them with that Clearness and Vivacity, that they began to suspect, that either this was he, or one sent before to prepare the way for him. However, he would not yet discover himself, but held them a little longer in suspence: To which end, *As they drew nigh to* Emmaus, *the Village whither they went, he made as tho he would have gone farther*, not to dissemble with them, but to try their Sincerity: *But they*, by their Importunity, *constrained him, saying, Abide with us, for it is towards Evening, and the Day is far spent*; so they prevail'd with him, *and he went in to tarry with them.* True Goodness is exorable, and easy to be entreated to reasonable things.

And it came to pass, as he sate at Meat with them, that he took Bread and blessed it, and brake, and gave it to them: where we may observe the Freedom of his Conversation; he made no difficulty to sit at Meat with his Inferiors, but ate and drank with them, and freely convers'd with all Mankind, tho the Pride of the *Pharisees* objected against it, thinking it beneath the Dignity of the Messias to be so familiar.

Again, From his taking Bread and blessing it before they eat, he hath given an Example of beginning our Meals with craving a Blessing, and ending them with giving of Thanks, which we call saying of Grace: this he was wont to do on all Occasions; as in the Miracle of the Loaves, all the Evangelists speak of his blessing and consecrating the Bread before he brake or distributed it. This is an Act of Piety whereby we own God to be the Author and Bestower of all good Gifts, shewing our Thankfulness for them, and depending upon his Blessing for the nourishing our Body, and sanctifying the Use of them to the Soul. Hence the Apostle tells us, that *every Creature of God is good, if it be received with Thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the Word of God and Prayer*: 1 Tim. 4. 4, 5. where we have a free Liberty granted us to all God's Creatures, provided we receive them with thankful Hearts, and implore his Blessing in the Use of them; which is a holy, reasonable and acceptable Service.

But to go on; as Christ sat at Meat with them, the Disciples, either by the accustom'd Form of Blessing us'd by him, or by some particular Words or Actions about the Bread, began to discover who he was: so the next words inform us; *And their Eyes were opened, and they knew him.* They whose

Eyes

Eyes were before held, that they ſhould not know him, now open'd, by which they plainly ſaw it was Chriſt. And here we may well think, what Tranſports of Joy poſſeſs'd the Breaſts of theſe Diſciples, upon the Sight and Knowledg of our Saviour.

Joſeph's making himſelf known to be alive to his Brethren, who had many ways contriv'd his Death, and his being rais'd to great Honour to ſave them who would have deſtroy'd him, was but a faint Reſemblance of Chriſt's Diſcovery of himſelf, to be alive by his Reſurrection from the Dead for the Salvation of Mankind, for whoſe Sins he died. And both of them afford fit matter for our Joy and Meditations on the Subject of this Day. The Diſciples ſeem'd to deſpair, and to give up all for loſt by his Death, their Hopes being in a manner ſwallow'd up and buried with him in his Grave; but they all reviv'd by this Manifeſtation of himſelf to them, and receiv'd a new Life by his Reſurrection: which made them ever after venture their own Lives, in atteſting the Truth and Certainty they had of his. And now having fully ſatisfy'd them in the Belief of this great Truth, upon which all his Doctrine and their Expectations depended, he left them, *and vaniſh'd out of their ſight*. How, or by what means he diſappear'd, as it is not here related, ſo neither will it become us too curiouſly to enquire.

When he was gone, they recollected the Diſcourſe that paſs'd between them in the Way, *and ſaid one to another, Did not our Hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he open'd to us the Scriptures?* And this may ſhew us the great Benefit of Holy Conference one with another about Sacred Things, eſpecially in wiſe and good Company; how much it tends to the enlightning of the Mind with true Knowledg, the firing of the Heart with true Zeal, and inflaming both with fervent Devotion: which ſhould teach us in ſome proper Seaſons, to prefer pious and religious Diſcourſe before the idle and vain Chat, that too much abound in common Converſation. The Diſciples found a Warmth in their Affections, and good Motions ſtirring in them by our Saviour's pious Conference with them; and we might find the like Effect, by uſing and attending more to holy Communication.

Hereupon the Diſciples *roſe up the ſame Hour, and went to* Jeruſalem; where finding the Eleven gather'd together, and thoſe that aſſociated with them, they ſaid unto them, *The Lord is riſen indeed, and hath appear'd to* Simon: meaning-

ing, that there could be now no farther doubt of the Truth of his Resurrection, having appear'd to *Simon Peter*, the chief of the Apostles; to which St. *Paul* refers in 1 *Cor.* 15. 5. withal *telling them what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of Bread*; that is, either by his usual Form of blessing it, or by some other Actions he was wont to use about it.

This is the Sum of the Gospel for this Day, from which we may learn many useful Lessons. As,

1st, Not to be too easy and credulous in Matters of great Importance, but to use our utmost Study and Diligence in the Search and Inquiry after Truth: So the Disciples did by hearing the Scriptures expounded to them, with other means of attaining Knowledg. Our Saviour bids us to *search the Scriptures, for they testify of him, and contain the Words of Eternal Life*: and the *Bereans* are commended for searching whether things were so as they were related. This is the way to have our Faith well-grounded, and not to be carried about with every wind of Doctrine.

2dly, We are taught here, not to be too slow or backward in believing upon sufficient Evidence. This is here blam'd in the Disciples, which should make us yield to the Evidence of Truth.

3dly, We see here the great Advantage of Holy Conference; for the Hearts of these Disciples burnt with Zeal, while our Saviour talk'd with them; and we should find the same by the like holy and heavenly Discourse.

Lastly, Let us get our Hearts firmly establish'd in the Belief of Christ's Resurrection, upon which all our Faith and Hopes depend. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE LXVI.

The EPISTLE for *Easter-Tuesday.*

Acts xiii. 26——42.

Men and Brethren, Children of the Stock of Abraham, *and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the Word of this Salvation sent. For they that dwell at* Jerusalem, *and their Rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the Voices of the Prophets, which are read every Sabbath-Day, they have fulfill'd them in condemning him,* &c.

THIS Epistle for the Day is a part of St. *Paul*'s Sermon, preach'd to the *Jews* in the Synagogue of *Antioch*; wherein, after craving Audience, he declares how God Almighty first gather'd and govern'd his Church, chusing the House of *Israel* to be his peculiar People, and the Lot of his own Inheritance; shewing how he deliver'd them with a high hand out of the Bondage of *Egypt*, and led them thro the Wilderness into the Land of *Canaan*, which he divided among them by Lot. After which, he govern'd them by Judges for the space of four hundred and fifty Years, until *Samuel* the Prophet; when the People desiring a King, he gave them *Saul*, the Son of *Cis*, to be their King: whom God for his Disobedience to his Command remov'd, and rais'd up *David* the Son of *Jesse* to reign over them; who being a Man after his own Heart, and fulfilling all his Will, God promis'd out of his Seed to raise up unto *Israel* a Saviour Jesus, who should save his People from their Sins. And to prepare the way for him, he sent *John* as his Fore-runner, to baptize and preach the Doctrine of Repentance to all the People of *Israel*. And lest they should take him for this Saviour, he publickly declar'd, that *he was not he: But behold!* (saith he) *there cometh one after me, the Shoes of whose Feet he was not worthy to loose.* Now

The

The Apoſtle having thus put them in mind of the many great and particular Bleſſings, which God had heap'd on the People of *Iſrael*; he addreſſes to them in the Epiſtle for this Day, which begins with theſe words: *Men and Brethren, Children of the Stock of* Abraham, *and whoſoever among you feareth God; to you is the Word of this Salvation ſent.* He had before told them of a Saviour that was to ſpring out of the Loins and Lineage of *David*, together with the Salvation that was to be wrought by him; and here he acquaints them with the Perſons to whom this Salvation was firſt to be preach'd, and that was to the *Jewiſh* Nation, *of whom as concerning the Fleſh Chriſt came.* And therefore the Apoſtle here ſalutes them with the Title of *Men and Brethren*, they being his Country-men and Kinſfolk: And becauſe they loved to be thought and call'd *the Seed of* Abraham, he gratifies them with that Appellation, ſtiling them *Children of the Stock of* Abraham; which he enlarges to all *whoſoever among them feared God.*

Theſe were the Perſons that were firſt favour'd with God's ſending his Son, together with the Offers of Salvation by him. Chriſt himſelf declar'd, that he was not *ſent* at firſt to *any but the loſt Sheep of the Houſe of* Iſrael, *Mat.* 15. 24. And the ſame Commiſſion he gave to his Apoſtles, to go to them of the *Jewiſh* Nation before any others, *Mat.* 10. 6. But when they rejected Chriſt, and thruſt Salvation from them, then were the Apoſtles order'd to turn from them and go to the *Gentiles*: after which, all that fear'd God and wrought Righteouſneſs, were without reſpect of Perſons accepted with him; and to all ſuch, whether *Jew* or *Gentile*, is the Word of this Salvation ſent. So St. *John* ſpeaks concerning Chriſt, that *he came unto his own*; meaning the *Jews*, who were of his own Stock and Kindred: *but his own receiv'd him not*, that is, the generality of them rejected him. *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to as many as believ'd in his Name*; John 1. 11, 12.

Having mention'd the *Jews* rejecting of Chriſt for the Meſſiah, the Apoſtle adds ſomething touching the Reaſon, Manner, and End of it: *For they that dwell at* Jeruſalem, *and their Rulers* (ſaith he) *becauſe they knew him not, nor the Voices of the Prophets, which are read every Sabbath-Day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.* The Senſe of which Words is, that the Rulers and Inhabitants of *Jeruſalem* (meaning the Sanhedrim and the People) not know-

ing Christ to be the Messias; which they might easily have understood from the Speeches and Predictions of the Prophets, which were every Sabbath-Day read in their ears; have thro a wilful and affected Ignorance adjudg'd him to Death, and thereby fulfill'd the Prophecies of his Death and Sufferings with their own hands: which they could not or would not understand. To this St. *Paul* elsewhere refers, saying, that *the Princes and Rulers of the World knew him not; for had they known him, they would not have crucify'd the Lord of Glory.* 1 Cor. 2. 8.

This he farther aggravates, from the Innocency of his Person, and the Causelessness of his Sufferings: for *tho they found no cause of Death in him, yet desired they* Pilate *that he should be slain.* When they clamour'd for his Crucifixion, *Pilate* ask'd them, *Why, what Evil hath he done?* And when he declar'd that he found no fault in him, they still persisted in their Cry, and in a manner forc'd him by their Importunity to condemn him to be crucify'd. And having thus by their malicious Accusations *fulfill'd all that was written of him,* and finish'd the Work of Man's Redemption, he yielded to Death, and gave up the ghost. After which, *they took him down from the Tree, and laid him in a Sepulchre.* The Officers appointed for that purpose took his Body from the Cross, and put it in a Tomb prepar'd for it; which they seal'd up, and guarded by a Watch, and by all imaginable ways secur'd from being taken away. And yet after all this Care and Cost, *God* (saith he) *raised him from the Dead.* And to prevent all Doubts and false Reports in this matter, he continu'd for the space of forty days upon the earth; during which time he was often seen, not only by his Disciples, who did eat and drink, and converse with him, but *of many others that came up with him from* Galilee *to* Jerusalem, *who are his Witnesses unto the People,* and were ready to testify the truth of it to all the *Jews:* which things he here urg'd with great Evidence and Demonstration of the Spirit.

And now the Apostle having clear'd and confirm'd these Matters of Fact, he proceeds to the many great Blessings and Benefits that accrew to us by his Death and Resurrection; saying in the following words, *We declare unto you glad Tidings, how that the Promise which was made unto the Fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their Children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.*

Herein

Herein is ſet forth the glad Tidings of the Goſpel, how the Promiſe made to *Abraham*, that *in his Seed ſhould all the Nations of the Earth be bleſſed*, was in Chriſt, who deſcended from his Stock, made good to all that tread in the ſteps of his Faith, and do the Works of their Father *Abraham*. And this was done and certify'd to us by his riſing again from the Dead, of which *Iſaac*'s being reſcu'd from Death after he was doom'd to be ſacrific'd, was a Type or Repreſentation; and more clearly by that Prophecy of *David* in the ſecond Pſalm, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*: which muſt be underſtood not ſo much of the Day of his Birth, as of his Reſurrection, when he was ſeated on his Throne, to govern and ſave his People; having thereby deſtroy'd the laſt Enemy, which is Death, and reſtor'd his Followers to the Hopes of eternal Life.

This he farther enlarges upon in the next words, ſaying, *As concerning God's raiſing him up from the Dead, now no more to return to Corruption, he ſaid on this wiſe, I will give you the ſure Mercies of* David. Chriſt's Reſurrection was to a State of Immortality, never to die again; not like that of *Lazarus* and others, whoſe Reſurrection was but a ſhort Reprieve from the Grave, to return to it again: but Chriſt being rais'd from the Dead, *dies no more, Death hath no more dominion over him.* Which Privilege he confers on all his faithful Followers, to be rais'd to a Life immortal, not liable to a ſecond Death, or ſubject to Mortality, but to be inſtated in a Condition of endleſs Life, and advanc'd to an everlaſting Kingdom. This is here expreſs'd by *the ſure Mercies of* David; which, in *Iſa.* 55. 3. from whence it is quoted, is call'd *an everlaſting Covenant*, or the Promiſe of an everlaſting Kingdom to be continu'd to *David* and his Seed for evermore. Which cannot be meant of a temporal or earthly Kingdom, for that hath ſometimes fail'd in his Poſterity; but of that ſpiritual and heavenly Kingdom promis'd and veſted in Chriſt, the Son of *David*, of whom it is ſaid, that *the Lord God ſhall give unto him the Throne of his Father* David, *and he ſhall reign over the Houſe of* Jacob *for ever; and of his Kingdom there ſhall be no end.* Iſa. 9. 7. This Promiſe or Prophecy, St. *Peter*, in his Sermon on the Day of Pentecoſt, plainly applies unto Chriſt, *Acts* 2. 29, 30. *Men and Brethren* (ſaith he) *let me freely ſpeak unto you of the Patriarch* David, *that he is both dead and buried, and his Sepulchre is with us unto this day: therefore being a*

Prophet, and knowing that God had ſworn with an Oath to him, that of the Fruits of his Loins, according to the Fleſh, he would raiſe up Chriſt to ſit on his Throne; he ſeeing this before, ſpake of the Reſurrection of Chriſt, that his Soul was not left in Hell, neither did his Body ſee Corruption. Wherefore he ſaith alſo in another Pſalm, *Thou ſhalt not ſuffer thy Holy One to ſee Corruption*, Pſal. 16. 11. which Paſſage muſt neceſſarily have relation unto Chriſt, for it cannot properly belong to *David*, as the next words declare: *For* David, *after he had ſerv'd his own Generation by the Will of God, fell on ſleep, and was laid to his Fathers, and ſaw Corruption*: He died a natural Death, and roſe not again, his Body putrifying in the Earth.

But he whom God raiſed again, ſaw no Corruption; that is, Chriſt in whom this Prophecy was fulfill'd, roſe again the third Day; the time before the Bodies are wont to putrify, and ſo was not in any meaſure corrupted. This was a peculiar Privilege belonging to Chriſt's Body, which becauſe it did no Sin, it ſaw no Corruption: but our Bodies, by reaſon of Sin, are permitted to putrify, and made ſubject to Corruption. However, Chriſt by the Power and Virtue of his Reſurrection, will change our vile Bodies, that they may be like unto his glorious Body; for tho they are ſown in Corruption, they ſhall be rais'd in Incorruption, and theſe mortal Bodies ſhall put on Immortality. And then ſhall be brought to paſs the Saying that is written, *Death is ſwallow'd up in Victory.* This made the Apoſtle triumph over it in that inſulting ſtrain, *O Death! where is thy Sting? O Grave! where is thy Victory? The Sting of Death is Sin, and the Strength of Sin is the Law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the Victory through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* Theſe are ſome of the ineſtimable Benefits obtain'd for us by Chriſt's Reſurrection. For which reaſon, St. *Paul*, for the greater Conviction of the *Jews*, thus beſpeaks them; *Be it known unto you therefore, Men and Brethren, that thro this Man is preached unto you the Forgiveneſs of Sins:* meaning, that this Meſſias or Mediator between God and Man, is the only means of making our Peace and Reconciliation with God; for he alone can do away Sin, the only Makebate between us. By his Death he hath taken away the Enmity, and blotted out the Hand-writing that was againſt us; and by his Life and Doctrine hath chalk'd out a way for penitent Sinners to find Mercy and Pardon from him. In ſhort, he only hath the Word of Reconciliation, which

he

he committed to his Apoſtles and their Succeſſors in the Work of the Miniſtry, and hath order'd them in his Name and thro his Merits to preach the Forgiveneſs of Sins; which is to be obtain'd no other way. For

By him all that believe are juſtified from all things, from which they could not be juſtified by the Law of Moſes. The Law of *Moſes* conſiſting moſtly of Types and Shadows of good things to come, could not make the Comers thereunto perfect, nor by the Works of the Law can any Fleſh living be juſtify'd. But the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt is abſolutely perfect and compleat, and being by the Grace and Favour of God imputed unto us, is every way ſufficient for our Juſtification.

And now the Apoſtle, in the Cloſe of this Epiſtle for the Day, cautions the *Jews* againſt perſiſting any longer in deſpiſing the Perſon, and rejecting the Doctrine of our Bleſſed Saviour; and wills them rather to receive and embrace the Goſpel, as 'tis now preach'd and confirm'd to them by Chriſt's Reſurrection from the Dead: leſt by refuſing this way of Salvation, ſo well atteſted and manifeſted to them, they bring upon themſelves ſome remarkable and aſtoniſhing Deſtruction, as a juſt Puniſhment for the deſpiſing the Riches of God's Grace and Mercy, ſo freely afforded and offer'd to them: *Beware therefore* (ſaith he) *leſt that come upon you, which is ſpoken of in the Prophets. Behold, ye Deſpiſers, and wonder and periſh; for I work a Work in your days, a Work which you ſhall in no wiſe believe, tho a Man declare it unto you.* Theſe words were ſpoken by the Prophet *Habakkuk*, to thoſe obſtinate *Jews*, who went on impenitently in their Sins, againſt all the Calls and Meſſages of the Prophets ſent to them for their Amendment, till a heavy Deſtruction came upon them by the *Chaldeans*, who ſpoil'd them of their Goods, and carry'd them captive into a ſtrange Land; a Work which they would not believe, tho they were told it, till it fell upon them: and therefore the Prophet bid them to *regard, and wonder marvellouſly* at their own Folly and Miſery, *Hab.* 1. 5. In like manner, the Apoſtle here calls upon ſome of the ſame Race of the *Jews*, who follow'd them in their Infidelity, to take heed of reſiſting the Doctrine of Chriſt, or deſpiſing his Meſſengers, and holding out obſtinately againſt the preaching of the Goſpel; for in ſo doing they would find ſome incredible Judgment befal them, which would be a matter of wonder and great amazement to them: which, as appears

after, was, first, The removing the Gospel from them, and carrying it to the *Gentiles*: and, secondly, the *Romans* breaking in upon them, and destroying both their Temple and City; which things they would not believe, till they came upon them.

For the first, *Paul* and *Barnabas* told these unbelieving and despising *Jews*, in the 46th Verse of this Chapter, that tho it *was necessary that the Word of God should be first preach'd to them, yet seeing they put it from them, and judg'd themselves unworthy of everlasting Life, lo! we turn to the* Gentiles; *for so hath the Lord commanded us.* Isa. 49. 6.

For the second, our Saviour himself told them, *That the Days should come, that their Enemies should cast a Trench about them, and compass them round on every side, and lay their City even with the ground; and because they stoned the Prophets that were sent unto them, should not leave one Stone upon another*: Luke 19. 46. which things after came to pass.

And 'twere well, if some such Unbelievers and Despisers were not to be found among us. But alas! there are too many who would be thought Christians, and yet not only deny but deride a crucify'd Saviour, and utterly reject all Divine Revelations. 'Twas the Saying of an Atheistical Pope, *Quantum nobis profuit hæc fabula de Christo?* And there are some still among our selves, who think the History of the Life, and Death, and Resurrection of Christ, to be no better than a Fable, and stile the preaching of them by the name of Priestcraft; ridiculing the Mysteries of the Gospel, and despising the Dispensers of them. What heavy Judgments these things may bring upon us, God only knows, and few will believe, tho we declare it unto them. The *Jews*, for their Infidelity in these matters, have been a forlorn scatter'd People ever since. The seven Churches of *Asia*, for the Contempt of Christ and his Ministers, were punish'd with the removing the Candlestick, or the Light of the Gospel, from them, and remain the Monuments of divine Vengeance to this day. And how shall we escape, if we neglect or contemn so great Salvation? Let us then take the warning of these Examples, and learn to repent and believe the Gospel, lest we likewise perish: So shall we engage the Providence of God to stand by us, and to avert the Evils that must otherwise befal us; which God grant, *&c.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE LXVII.

The GOSPEL for *Easter-Tuesday.*

St. Luke xxiv. 36——48.

Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrify'd and affrighted, and suppos'd that they had seen a Spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled, and why do Thoughts arise in your Hearts? Behold my Hands and my Feet, that it is I my self, &c.

THE Gospel for this Day being much the same with that appointed for the first Sunday after *Easter*, I shall speak but briefly of this, and refer the Reader to that.

It begins with Christ's first Appearance to his Apostles after his Resurrection, which was in the Evening of the Day on which he rose, when *Jesus himself stood in the midst of them.* St. *John* tells us, that *the Doors were shut*, where they met, *for fear of the* Jews; who could not bear the News of his Resurrection, but labour'd by all ways of Subtlety and Terror to stifle the Report of it. However, Christ by an Act of his Divine Power open'd the Doors, and came in among them, *and saith unto them, Peace be unto you*: which was the common Salutation us'd by Jews and Christians to those they met with Morning and Evening, and was not a meer idle Compliment; in which sense he forbad his Disciples to *salute any in the Way*, Luke 10. 4. but a real Benediction or Wish of all Health and Prosperity; Peace including in it all manner of Blessings. And therefore St. *John* tells us, he repeated it twice, saying again, *Peace be unto you*, John 20. 19, 21.

But the Disciples being at first surpriz'd at the sight or hearing of him, *were terrify'd and affrighted, and suppos'd that they had seen a Spirit.* They took him for a Spectrum

or

or Apparition, and no real Body; and ſo were a little ſcar'd and amaz'd at the Viſion. And this gave occaſion to ſome Hereticks after, to affirm that Chriſt was not the ſame Perſon after the Reſurrection that he was before, but took only an aerial Body, in which he appear'd for a while, and then vaniſh'd away. But Chriſt to remove this Fright of the Apoſtles, ſaid unto them, *Why are ye thus troubled? and why do Thoughts ariſe in your Hearts?*

And then to confute all Errors and Miſtakes about the Reality of his Body, he ſubmits himſelf to the moſt palpable Proofs and Demonſtrations of a Body, that the Weakneſs of their Faith could demand or deſire; ſaying, *Behold my Hands and my Feet, that it is I my ſelf; handle me and ſee, for a Spirit hath not Fleſh and Bones, as ye ſee me have.* Wherein he condeſcends to give them all imaginable Satisfaction by the Teſtimony of their own Senſes; for *when he had thus ſpoken, he ſhew'd them his Hands and his Feet:* Giving *Thomas* leave, at another Appearance, to ſee and feel the Prints of the Nails made both in his Hands and Feet, and thruſting his Hand into the Hole made in his Side by the Soldier's Spear; which was enough to convince the greateſt Infidel in ſo plain a Truth. But yet the exceeding great Tranſports of Joy at ſo ſtrange and ſudden a Diſcovery of himſelf, fill'd them indeed with Wonder, but ſtill left them a little diffident; for 'tis ſaid, *they yet believ'd not for Joy, and wonder'd.* And finding a little Diſtruſt ſtill remaining, he, to put an end to all their Doubts, *ſaid unto them, Have ye here any Meat?* calling for ſomething to eat, to ſhew that he was nouriſhed by the ſame Suſtenance with themſelves; *And they gave him a Piece of a broiled Fiſh, and of a Honey-comb, which he took and did eat before them.* By all which we ſee what pains he ſeem'd to take, to ſatisfy them of the Truth and Reality of his Body, and that he was the ſame Perſon he was before his Death and Reſurrection.

And here, by the way, we may learn ſome of the many and great Abſurdities of the Popiſh Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation.

As, 1*ſt*, From Chriſt's coming and ſtanding in the midſt of his Diſciples, we learn that Chriſt's Body had the ſame Poſtures and Dimenſions with ours; having all the Properties of a true Body, as Length, Breadth, and Thickneſs remaining in him, and ſo was circumſcrib'd and confin'd to Place as we are; and conſequently cannot be in many thouſand

and Places at the same time: which must be, if he be corporally present wherever the Holy Eucharist is celebrated. When Christ was upon Earth, we read of his moving from Place to Place, and from one Country to another; but never of his being in two or more Places at once: and when he ascended up into Heaven, we are told, that *the Heavens must receive him till the time of the Restitution of all things*, or the time of his last coming to Judgment. So that Ubiquity being repugnant to the Nature of a Body, and contrary to the Sense and Tenour of Holy Scripture, cannot without great Absurdity be believ'd, and much less impos'd as an Article of Faith necessary to Salvation. Nor yet,

2*dly*, Can our Saviour's Discourse here encourage any to think, that a Priest by pronouncing two or three words, can turn a Piece of Bread into Flesh and Blood, and make a Wafer to become a human Body. This some have derided as a sort of Conjuring, the Terms of *Hocus Pocus* us'd in it being a Contraction of *Hoc est Corpus*. Nor may we imagine that Christ is so easily to be brought down from Heaven by a Word's speaking, for this would multiply the one Body he receiv'd from the Virgin *Mary* into many more, yea, into as many as there are Communions in the Christian World; which is a gross Absurdity and Contradiction to affirm.

3*dly*, From Christ's appealing to the Senses of his Disciples about the Truth and Reality of his Body, we learn that the Senses are the most proper Judges in such Cases; and to weaken the Testimony or destroy the Evidence of the Senses, is to leave us in doubt whether Christ's Body ever rose from the Dead: *Handle me and see me*, (saith our Saviour) *for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones, as ye see me have.* Where the whole Stress of his Argument lies upon their seeing and feeling of him: So that if we cannot see or feel any thing in the Eucharist but real Bread and Wine, we may well enough conclude, there is no real Body or Blood of Christ there; for Flesh and Bones are both visible and palpable, and where neither of these Qualities are to be found, there can be no Proof of a Body, but only of a Spirit or Apparition. So that the Disbelief of our Senses, and weakning the Testimony of them, would invalidate all our Saviour's Discourse in this matter. Yea, farther, the denying the Testimony of the Senses would take away all the Evidence of the Truth of Christ's

Doctrine,

Doctrine, and undermine the whole Chriſtian Religion: for the main Proof we have of it, is from the Miracles that were done to confirm it; and the ſole Proof of thoſe Miracles was from the Teſtimony of thoſe that ſaw them, and were Eye and Ear-witneſſes of them. But if our Senſes are not to be believ'd or truſted, there is an End of all the Proof and Evidence we have for the Truth of our Religion: which ſhould teach us to beware of ſuch Doctrines, as are attended with ſuch bad Conſequents.

But to proceed to the next words of this Goſpel, *which are the ſame that he ſpake unto them, whilſt he was alive with them, That all things muſt be fulfill'd which were written in the Law of* Moſes, *and in the Prophets, and in the Pſalms concerning him*; for they all ſpake of him, and foretold what after came to paſs.

And having open'd the bodily Eyes of his Diſciples, to behold his corporeal Preſence; *he then open'd the Eyes of their Underſtanding, that they might underſtand the Scriptures*: eſpecially thoſe that related to himſelf, for *he ſaid unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behov'd Chriſt to ſuffer, and to riſe from the Dead the third Day.* Thus it is written in the Book of the Prophets; and thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer, upon a double Account:

1. For the fulfilling of the Scriptures, which otherwiſe could not have been true; for God having declar'd ſuch things concerning the Meſſias, and made them the diſtinguiſhing Marks for the World to know him by, they became neceſſary for the vindicating of the Truth of God's Word, who had ſo long before given warning of them by the Prophets. Again,

2. Theſe things were neceſſary to anſwer the determinate Counſel and Foreknowledg of God concerning the Way and Manner of Man's Redemption. And therefore thus it behov'd Chriſt to ſuffer and riſe again, that by his Death and Reſurrection he might in all Points ſuit the Character of the Meſſiah, and fulfil the Scheme and Deſign of Man's Redemption; which could not ſo well be anſwer'd by any other, as by theſe Means.

And, Laſtly, *That Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins ſhould be preach'd in his Name among all Nations*; which could not be effected but by his Sufferings and Satisfaction. And theſe things were to *begin at* Jeruſalem, *as they themſelves were Witneſſes.*

Upon

Upon the whole then, let us from hence learn to eſtabliſh our Minds in the Belief of theſe Truths, and not only ſo, but adore the Power, admire the Wiſdom, and thankfully acknowledg the Goodneſs of God in the whole Tranſaction.

DISCOURSE LXVIII.

The EPISTLE for the firſt Sunday after *Eaſter*.

1 St. John v. 4——13.

Whatſoever is born of God, overcometh the World; and this is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith. Who is he that overcometh the World, but he that believeth that Jeſus is the Son of God? &c.

THE Church antiently obſerv'd the *Octave*, or eighth Day after the great Feſtivals, which was commonly the Sunday following them, and had uſually the ſame or like Service to the foregoing Feſtival. Accordingly this Day being the *Octave*, or the eighth Day from *Eaſter*, call'd therefore *Low-Eaſter*, continues the Memorial of Chriſt's Reſurrection, which hath ſome joyful Days to follow it, in honour of that high Solemnity; the thing we celebrate thereon being the main Pillar of our Faith, and the Foundation of all our Hopes: for if Chriſt had not dy'd, we had been yet in our Sins; and if he had not riſen again, all our Hopes had been bury'd with him: but *Thanks be to God, who giveth us the Victory, thro our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

The Collect for the Day minds us of the Reaſon and Motive of Chriſt's Death, which was for our Sins; and likewiſe of the End of his Reſurrection, which was for our Juſtification: and thence teaches us to pray for Grace, ſo to put away the Leven of Malice and Wickedneſs, that we may alway ſerve him in Pureneſs of Living and Truth. Sutable hereunto,

The

The Epiſtle for the Day minds us of that new Birth we have by Chriſt's Reſurrection, being thereby rais'd from the Death of Sin to a Life of Grace, together with the bleſſed Fruits and Effects of it, one whereof is a Victory over the World, and a Power over other ghoſtly Enemies: ſo the Epiſtle begins, *Whatſoever is born of God, overcometh the World*; where by being *born of God*, we are to underſtand that new Birth we receive in Baptiſm by the Reſurrection of Chriſt, by which we are ſaid to be *begotten again to a lively Hope*. St. *John* ſtiles it, a being *born again of Water and the Spirit*, without which there is *no entering into the Kingdom of God*; John 3. 5. St. *Paul* expreſſes it by the *waſhing of Regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt*; Tit. 3. 5, 6. meaning, that the Spirit of God moving upon the Waters of Baptiſm, makes them ſalutary, to the purging away the Guilt of Sin, to the renewing our Natures, and thereby giving a ſpiritual Life of Grace to us. Now whoſoever is thus born of God (ſaith our Text) *overcometh the World*: What is here meant by the World, St. *John* tells us, 1 *John* 2. 16. all that is in the World, is *the Luſts of the Fleſh, the Luſt of the Eye, and the Pride of Life*; that is, the Pleaſures, the Profits, and the Honours of the World, are the Sum Total or Inventory of all its Goods. To overcome the World, is not totally to refuſe, or diſdainfully to reject theſe things; for in the right uſe of them, they are the Bleſſings of God, and ſome of the chiefeſt Comforts of this preſent Life; but 'tis to deſtroy that Dominion and inveigling Power it hath over the Minds of Worldlings, that they may not prove Snares to entrap or endanger our Souls, by drawing them from the Love of God, or ſeeking the better things above: ſo that the overcoming the World, is the taking off the Heart from all inordinate Love of it, and weakning the Force both of its Terrors and Temptations.

1ſt, I ſay, to overcome the World, is to take off the Heart from all inordinate Love and Purſuit of it, that it may not engroſs too much of our Time, Thoughts, and Affections, that we make not the things of the World the chiefeſt Objects of our Deſire and Delight, nor place too much Truſt and Confidence in them; for that is to love the World more than God, and to ſerve Mammon before our Maker. This is to idolize and worſhip it, and inſtead of overcoming the World, to be overcome by it; and of whom a Man is overcome, of him he is brought in Bondage:

dage: ſo that they who ſet their Minds and Affections too much upon theſe things, are truly enough ſtil'd Slaves to the World, for it hath got the power over them, and puts them upon the vileſt and baſeſt Drudgeries. Againſt this our Apoſtle cautions, ſaying, *Love not the World, nor the things of the World; if any Man thus love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him:* 1 John 2. 15. Now to overcome the World, is to keep our Hearts looſe from it, to raiſe them above it, and to place our chiefeſt Deſire and Confidence in God, and the things of Heaven. Again,

2ly, To overcome the World, is to weaken the Force both of its Terrors and Temptations. The World hath Frowns to affright, and Smiles to allure; both which we are to reſiſt and conquer. The frightful part of the World are Perſecutions and Troubles, the Loſſes and Croſſes we meet with in this Life; which things are often made uſe of, to drive Men from their Duty to God, and draw them to the Love of Sin and the World, and too many are overcome and miſled by them: but he that is born of God, overcomes theſe Terrors, and lives above the Frowns and Affrightments of the World; he knows them to be only Trials of his Patience and Conſtancy, and the Means of amending and making him better, and ſo inſtead of driving him from God, bring him the nearer to him.

The tempting part of the World, are the Wealth and Honours, the Power and Pleaſures of this Life, which are the Charms that bewitch and allure many to their eternal Ruin: Theſe likewiſe, he that is born of God, is enabled to overcome by the power of Divine Grace; for he renounces them in his Baptiſm, and therein receives the Aſſiſtance of God's holy Spirit, to ſubdue and vanquiſh them.

But what is that Victory, that gives him this Power over the Terrors and Temptations of the World? Why, that the next words tell us, *And this is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith*; which Faith the Author to the *Hebrews* deſcribes to be *the Subſtance of Things hop'd for, and the Evidence of Things not ſeen:* Heb. 11. 1. 'Tis that Grace that makes the future Happineſs of the next World preſent to us in this, whereby we become as firmly perſuaded of the Truth of thoſe inviſible Glories, as if they were actually before our Eyes: And becauſe theſe infinitely outſhine all the tranſitory Glories and Advantages of this Life, it makes us deſpiſe theſe, to attain the other. By this Faith it was that the Patriarchs, and many other Worthies,

thies, obtain'd thoſe noble Victories over the World, which are mention'd in that Chapter, who *thro Faith ſubdu'd Kingdoms, wrought Righteouſneſs, obtain'd the Promiſes, ſtopp'd the Mouths of Lions, quench'd the Violence of Fire, eſcap'd the Edg of the Sword, out of Weakneſs were made ſtrong, put to flight the Armies of the Aliens*; with many other mighty Atchievements there mention'd at large. And 'tis by this Faith alone, that we can gain this Conqueſt over the Charms and Inveiglements of the World; which it does partly, by ſhewing us the Meanneſs, the Shortneſs, and the Vanity of all things here below, how ſuddenly the Glories of the World vaniſh away, how quickly the Pleaſures of it end in loathing, and how ſoon the Treaſures of it are melted down, and come to nothing: And partly likewiſe by propounding to us the Joys of Heaven, and ſhewing their tranſcendent Excellency above all earthly things; how far the immortal Treaſures of the next World exceed the fading Riches of this, and how much the laſting unallay'd Pleaſures at God's right Hand are to be prefer'd before the preſent dull, ſhort, and nauſeous Delights of Senſe. This way the Apoſtles, and the noble Army of Martyrs, conquer'd all the Frowns and Flatteries of the World by the Eye of Faith, looking thro and beyond thoſe things, to a Crown of Glory reſerv'd in Heaven for them.

But what is that Faith that makes us ſo victorious over the World? Why, that the next words reſolve, 'tis the believing that Jeſus is the Son of God: *Who is he that overcometh the World, but he that believeth Jeſus to be the Son of God?* that is, he that takes him for the true Meſſias, and conſequently receives his Doctrine, and obeys his Precepts: For the Faith that doth theſe great Feats, is not a bare notional or ſpeculative Faith, that ſwims only in the Brain, or from thence glides down upon the Tongue; but a warm, active, and lively Faith, that affects the Heart, and excites the whole Man to Action. A dull languid Faith can never do the Work of our Salvation, it hath not Strength and Courage enough to give battle to any one ſingle Luſt, and much leſs can it reſiſt or vanquiſh the Force of ſtronger Temptations. It muſt be a Faith inflam'd with the Love of God, that can alone prevail over the Love of the World; its Charms are potent and forcible, and draw ſtrongly, and it muſt be a very lively, vigorous, and operative Faith to maſter and overcome them: a dead, lazy, and ſluggiſh Faith is no more able to obtain this difficult

Victory,

Victory, than a dead Man can perform the Functions of Life.

Again, the Faith that overcomes the World, muſt be ſtedfaſt and well-grounded, that it may hold out to the end: for the World is daily preſenting us with new Objects, and we are frequently aſſaulted with divers and ſtrong Temptations; and therefore our Faith had need be well bottom'd, to ſtand firm and to bear the ſhock of ſuch various and violent Aſſaults. Hence the Apoſtle, in 1 *Cor.* 15. having at large demonſtrated the Truth of the Reſurrection, both Chriſt's and ours, he exhorts Chriſtians, in the cloſe of the Chapter, to be *ſtedfaſt and unmovable in this Faith, always abounding in the Work of the Lord*, that flows from and follows upon it, aſſuring them, that *their Labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord*; for they ſhall have Strength enough to aſſiſt them, and Reward enough to encourage them. *My Grace is ſufficient for you* (ſaith Chriſt) and therefore fear not, for *greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the World.* This St. *Paul* found by Experience; for he tells us, that he *could do all things thro Chriſt which ſtrengthen'd him.* There was nothing too difficult for him to do, nor too hard for him to ſuffer; and having finiſh'd his Courſe, and kept the Faith, by which he overcame the World, there was laid up for him, in the other, a Crown of Righteouſneſs, which God the righteous Judg will give him at the laſt Day.

Now the Apoſtle having taught us, that the Means of obtaining Victory over the World, is by believing Jeſus to be the Son of God, he proceeds to point him out to us, by the Manner and Circumſtances of his Coming, in the next Verſe, *This is he that came by Water and Blood, even Jeſus Chriſt, not by Water only, but by Water and Blood*; meaning, that he came in our human Nature, and tho he was the Son of God, yet he became alſo the Son of Man, and took a Body like ours, which being *pierc'd with the Soldier's Spear* at his Crucifixion, there *came forth of it Water and Blood*; John 19. 34. which ſhew'd both the Reality of his Body, and the Certainty of his Death. Beſide, Water, we know, is the Emblem of Purity, becauſe it cleanſeth all other things; and Blood is the Emblem of Patience, becauſe the ſhedding of it cauſeth Death. And here the former repreſents the Innocence and Purity of Chriſt's Life, and the latter the Patience and Severity of his Death; of which excellent Graces he himſelf hath given us the higheſt

Example, which we are therefore to imitate, the better to gain this Victory over the World, living in it with Purity and Innocence, and leaving it with Patience and a good Conſcience: both which are here repreſented and recommended to us by the Water and Blood that iſſu'd out of his Side, *not by Water only*, or by either alone, *but by Water and Blood*, both together flowing from our Saviour's Body.

But the Fathers have obſerv'd here another and higher Myſtery, in Chriſt's Coming by Water and Blood; namely, that by a ſpecial Act of God's Providence, there flow'd at that time, out of Chriſt's Side, the two Sacraments, the Water repreſenting Baptiſm, and the Blood the Lord's Supper; the one to cleanſe us from the Guilt of Sin, and the other to continue and confirm our Graces. To aſſure us hereof, the Apoſtle adds, *And it is the Spirit that beareth witneſs, becauſe the Spirit is Truth*; meaning, that we have the Teſtimony of the Holy Ghoſt for theſe things, who witneſſes them to us, not only outwardly by the Word, but inwardly in the Heart of true Believers: and this Teſtimony may be fitly believ'd and rely'd upon, being the Teſtimony of the Spirit of God, whoſe Title it is to be the Spirit of Truth.

But to put this great Truth of Chriſt's Meſſiahſhip, the Belief whereof is that Faith that overcometh the World, out of all doubt, the Apoſtle brings in the Teſtimony of the whole Trinity to confirm it, in the next words, ſaying, *There are three that bear Record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghoſt; and theſe three are one.* God the Father teſtify'd of him, by a Voice from Heaven, ſaying, *Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleas'd*, Mat. 3. 17. & 17. 5. God the Son teſtify'd it by the Doctrine he deliver'd, and the Miracles that confirm'd it: God the Holy Ghoſt teſtify'd it, by deſcending on him in the Likeneſs of a Dove, and lighting upon him: And theſe three being one in Nature and Eſſence, infinite in Knowledg, Holineſs, and Truth, their concurring Teſtimony muſt be infallibly true and certain. But beſides theſe Witneſſes in Heaven, *there are three that bear witneſs in Earth, the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood; and theſe three agree in one.* The Spirit, or Holy Ghoſt, bore witneſs of him, by coming down upon him here on Earth, and after by deſcending on his Apoſtles, who thereby ſaw and teſtify'd that the Father had ſent the Son to be the Saviour

viour of the World; 1 *John* 14. 4. The Water and the Blood teſtify'd of him, by coming out of his Side, and thereby ſhewing the Reality of his human Nature, and the Sufferings he underwent in it; and ſo became the Emblems of the two Sacraments appointed to preſerve his Memory. And theſe three agreeing in atteſting the ſame thing, we may ſafely rely upon them as ſure and unconteſtable Witneſſes. From thence St. *John* proceeds to argue,

That *if we receive the Witneſs of Men, the Witneſs of God is greater.* If in all our worldly Affairs we allow the Teſtimony of two or three credible Witneſſes, and generally believe what is ſo atteſted; how much more worthy of Belief is the infallible Teſtimony of God himſelf, eſpecially when all the three Perſons of the Holy Trinity concur in the aſſerting and atteſting of it? *And this is the Witneſs of God, which he hath teſtify'd of his Son*; that is, ſuch is the Evidence here given of Chriſt's being the Son of God, which is built upon the Veracity of God himſelf, and the Teſtimony of the whole Trinity.

But we need not look ſo far abroad for Evidence in this matter; for *he that believeth on the Son of God* (ſaith our Apoſtle) *hath the Witneſs in himſelf*: that is, his own Conſcience will abundantly clear up this matter to him, and the Comfort he feels in believing of it will perſuade him more of the Truth of it, than a thouſand Witneſſes; for the Holy Spirit will imprint it on his Heart, and fill him with that Joy and Peace in believing, which will not ſuffer him to make the leaſt doubt or ſcruple about it. Yea, to queſtion this matter, after ſo full Evidence as God hath given of it, is to impute Falſhood to him who is Truth it ſelf; for *he that believeth not God* (ſay the next words) *hath made him a Lyar, becauſe he believeth not the Record that God gave of his Son.* And what is the Record that theſe divine Witneſſes give of him? Why, *This is the Record* (ſaith St. *John*) *that God hath given to us eternal Life, and this Life is in his Son.* Eternal Life is the greateſt Bleſſing that Heaven can give, or we receive; and this Bleſſing God the Father hath contriv'd and confer'd upon us: for which reaſon, St. *Paul* ſtiles *eternal Life the Gift of God, Rom.* 6. 23. But yet *this Life* (ſaith our Apoſtle) *is in the Son*; that is, 'tis in him as the Cauſe, the Head, and Foundation of it; 'tis he that by the Merits of his Death hath purchas'd eternal Life, and by a Deed of Gift hath ſeal'd and conſign'd it to us. We that by our Sins have brought

Death and Miſery upon our ſelves, are unable to preſerve a Natural Life, and much more to procure a Spiritual and Eternal Life for us; this is wholly in Chriſt, who is therefore ſaid to be *the Way, the Truth, and the Life:* he is the Way, to ſhew us how to walk; the Truth, to direct us what to believe; and the Life, to bring us to eternal Salvation. This he hath purchas'd by the Price of his Sufferings, and ſo may beſtow it how and on whom he pleaſes: the way of entring into this Life, is by keeping in the Path of his Commandments; by believing his Word, and following his Example, we get an Intereſt in his Merits and Favour. And then,

He that thus hath the Son, hath Life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not Life. He that hath a true lively Faith in Chriſt, is by promiſe intitled to Eternal Life, and then is as ſure of attaining to it, as if he were already poſſeſs'd of it; but he that hath no ſhare in the Promiſe, is utterly excluded from all hopes of Life, and muſt be doom'd at laſt to Eternal Death.

This is the Driſt of the Epiſtle for this Day, which acquaints us with a Victory gain'd over the World; with the Manner how we may ſhare in the Glory and Benefit of it. From whence we may learn,

1ſt, To labour every one to partake of this Victory in his own Perſon. A Chriſtian Life is in Scripture often ſtil'd a Warfare, and we are all here in a militant State. One of the chief Enemies we are ſaid to encounter, is the World, with all the Baits and Temptations thereof, againſt which we fight under Chriſt's Banner; who, by the Aſſiſtance of his Grace, makes us more than Conquerors. We began this Holy War at our Baptiſm, when we ſolemnly renounc'd the World with all its Pomps and Vanities, and promis'd to maintain the Combat to our Livesend. Chriſt, the Captain of our Salvation, deſpis'd all the Kingdoms of the Earth, and the Glory of them, when offer'd to him upon unworthy and unwarrantable Terms. And we too, by his Example, ſhould trample upon all the Profits and Preferments of the World, when they cannot be had without Sin: He that can do this, hath elevated his Mind above the Frowns or Flatteries of this World, and ſo may be truly ſaid to overcome it. This then let us all endeavour to do, and when we have conquer'd this World, we ſhall enter in Triumph into a better.

2dly,

2*dly*, Since Faith in Chriſt is not only the Way to this Victory, but even the Victory it ſelf; let us all labour for a true, lively, and active Faith in him, for that will help us to over-look this vain, tranſitory and periſhing World, and to behold the inviſible Joys and Glories of the World to come, between which there is no compariſon. The miſery is, that Divine and Heavenly Objects lie at preſent out of ſight; they are above the ken and reach of our Senſes, and therefore do not ſo powerfully and ſo conſtantly affect us, as far meaner things that lie before us, and are daily preſented to our view. Now Faith is that Grace that makes future Things preſent; an intellectual Eye can diſcern things remote and ſpiritual, and ſtrike our Minds with a far greater Deſire and Delight in them, than in any earthly and ſenſual Objects. Let us therefore (as the Apoſtle directs) *live more by Faith* and leſs *by Sight*; and that will enable us to ſay with *David*, Lord! *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth, that I deſire in compariſon of thee*; Pſal. 73. 25. When we are arriv'd to this, we may be truly ſaid to have overcome the World, and by the ſtrength of our Faith to have gain'd the Victory, through Chriſt that loved us.

3*dly*, Since Chriſt came by Water and Blood, the Emblems of Purity and Patience, and Types of the Holy Sacraments; let us have an eſteem for thoſe Elements ſo conſecrated by him, and live in the Uſe of thoſe Sacraments of Baptiſm and the Holy Euchariſt, which are repreſented and celebrated by them.

4*thly*, Since Heaven and Earth bore witneſs of Chriſt, that he was the Son of God, and the Saviour of the World; let us receive their Teſtimony, and rely upon him as ſuch: to do otherwiſe, is to make God a Lyar, and to refuſe the Atonement he hath contriv'd and provided for us; and *how ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect and deſpiſe ſo great Salvation?*

Laſtly, Since the Record they bore of him is, that God the Father giveth Eternal Life by his Son; let us all ſeek to him for it in the Ways of his own Appointment, for there is no Salvation in any other. 'Twas our Saviour's complaint concerning the *Jews*, that they would not come unto him that they might have Life, but choſe rather the way that leadeth to Deſtruction; for which reaſon, they are left to groan under their choſen Ruin. Let not this be our Condemnation, that after we have been ſhew'd the Paths of Life, we walk on ſtill to the Chambers of Death; but

leaving the ways of Sin and Error, let us have recourſe to him, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and by following of him, we ſhall arrive at laſt to the Land of Everlaſting Life: which God grant, *&c.*

DISCOURSE LXIX.

The GOSPEL for the Firſt Sunday after *Eaſter.*

St. John xx. 19——24.

The ſame Day at Evening, being the firſt Day of the Week, when the Doors were ſhut, where the Diſciples were aſſembled for fear of the Jews, *came Jeſus and ſtood in the midſt, and ſaith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had ſo ſaid, he ſhewed unto them his Hands and his Side,* &c.

THIS Goſpel for the Day continues the great Subject of Chriſt's Reſurrection, and contains the Means us'd for convincing the Diſciples of the Reality of it, the Effects it had upon them, and the publick Bleſſings that were confer'd thereupon. It begins with an Account of a Meeting of the Diſciples upon the firſt News of his being riſen, to conſult and comfort one another upon the Glad-Tidings; together with the Time, Place, and other Circumſtances that attend that great Action: all which are to be the Subject of this Day's Meditations.

The ſame Day, being the firſt Day of the Week; that is, the ſame Day that Chriſt roſe from the Dead: for he lay in the Grave the ſeventh Day, which was the *Jewiſh* Sabbath, and roſe again from thence early the next Morning, which was the firſt Day of the Week. On the *Evening* of that Day *the Diſciples were aſſembled together*, to confer about this great matter, and *ſhut the Doors upon them for fear of the* Jews; leſt their Diſcourſe and Belief of it being nois'd abroad, might occaſion trouble, they faſten'd the Doors where they were, and kept themſelves as cloſe and ſecret as poſſible, to avoid all Danger from the *Jews*, who could not bear

bear the Report, and much leſs the ſpreading of it. However, tho the Doors were thus induſtriouſly lock'd and barr'd, to prevent any coming in upon them; yet *Jeſus*, to their great Amazement, *came and ſtood in the midſt of them*: Not that he penetrated or paſs'd through the Doors, for that is repugnant to the Nature and Dimenſions of a Body, but he miraculouſly open'd the Doors, and came in among them; as the Angel after open'd the Priſon-Gates for *Peter* to let him out; of which we read, *Acts* 12. 10.

Being come in, *he ſaith unto them, Peace be unto you*; which was an uſual Form of Salutation, enjoin'd by Chriſt himſelf, *Luke* 10. 5. *Into whatſoever Houſe ye enter, ſay firſt, Peace be to this Houſe.*

After this Salutation, he proceeds to give them ſatisfaction concerning the Reality of his Perſon; for finding them under no ſmall Surprize and Concern about it, he ſeeks to remove their Fears, by *ſhewing them his Hands and his Side.* St. *Luke* relates this Paſſage more at large, *Chap.* 24. 37, &c. telling us, that the Diſciples *were terrify'd and affrighted* at this unexpected Viſit, and *ſuppos'd that they had ſeen a Spirit.* But he ſaid unto them, *Why are ye troubled, and why do Thoughts ariſe in your Hearts? Behold my Hands and my Feet, that it is I my ſelf; handle me and ſee me, for a Spirit hath not Fleſh and Bones, as ye ſee me have,* &c.

When they were recover'd out of their Fright, and by thoſe palpable Proofs fully ſatisfy'd that it was his very Perſon, and his real Human Body which they ſaw, *then were the Diſciples glad, when they ſaw the Lord.* They who were extremely dejected at his Paſſion, and had all their Hopes buried in the ſame Grave with him; ſaying, in that deſpairing Language, *We thought it had been he that ſhould have redeemed* Iſrael; but his Death hath cut off all our Hopes, and left us nothing but Sorrow and Diſappointment: theſe very Perſons were exceedingly reviv'd at the ſight of him being riſen again; this gave a new Life to their dying Hopes, and they were tranſported beyond meaſure, with Extaſies of Joy; they were glad when they ſaw the Lord, whom they dearly lov'd, for whoſe ſake they parted with all, one who lov'd them to the Death, and purchas'd Eternal Life for them. The word here render'd, *They were glad*, in the Original ſignifies, not only Joy, but Thankſgiving, and denotes, the Diſciples breaking into both upon the ſight of their Lord.

Being thus deliver'd of all their Doubts and Fears, and fill'd with great Joy and Rejoicing, he repeats his former Salutation; *saying again to them, Peace be unto you:* which is a wiſh of all Health and Happineſs; Peace being ſet in Scripture to ſignify all ſorts of Bleſſings. By this he took his leave of them, and being ſhortly to leave the World and go to his Father, he gave them the ſame Commiſſion that he receiv'd from the Father, and had executed in his own Perſon, in theſe words; *As my Father hath ſent me, even ſo ſend I you:* that is, having ſettled and eſtabliſh'd a Church among you, I commit the ſame Care of it to you in my Abſence, that the Father committed to me, when preſent with you.

And what was that? Why, it conſiſted chiefly in two or three things.

1ſt, As my Father ſent me to teach and inſtruct the Church, and to ſhew to all the Members of it, the way to Salvation; ſo ſend I you upon the ſame Errand, to propagate the Goſpel, and to teach the People the Myſteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. This Branch of their Commiſſion St. *Matthew* expreſſes in theſe Terms; *Go ye and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt, teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you*; Matth. 28. 19, 20. While Chriſt was upon Earth, he inſtructed his Followers himſelf, as appears by his Divine Sermon on the Mount, and the many Parables and Precepts deliver'd by him, all which he confirm'd with unqueſtionable Miracles; which ſhew'd him to be a Teacher come from God, and that what he ſpake were the words of Eternal Life. At his departure, he committed to the Apoſtles this word of Reconciliation, willing them, as his Ambaſſadors, to preach and publiſh to the World the Glad-tidings of Salvation procur'd by him, and beſeeching them in his ſtead to be reconciled unto God, that they may be partakers of it. This was the End and Buſineſs for which God the Father ſent his Son, the doing whereof he often ſtiles, *the doing the Work, and ſeeking the Honour of him that ſent him.* And this is the Errand upon which God the Son ſent his Apoſtles, and likewiſe all that orderly ſucceed them in the Work of the Miniſtry; who are ſtill requir'd to feed the Flock of Chriſt with ſound Doctrine, and to go before them with a holy and pious Example, that they may ſave themſelves, and them that hear them.

2dly, As

2*dly*, As my Father ſent me to rule and govern the Church, ſo ſend I you with the ſame Authority to execute that Office in my ſtead. Our Saviour after his Reſurrection declar'd, that *all Power was given unto him in Heaven and in Earth*, Mat. 28. 18. By which he was made Lord and King over the Church, with full Authority to diſpoſe and order all things in it. By virtue hereof, as he govern'd the Church himſelf whilſt he remain'd upon Earth, ſo before his Aſcenſion he deputed and delegated the ſame Power to his Apoſtles when he was gone; giving them Authority over the other Diſciples, to preſide and order all things in the Church by the Rules which he had left them. For as no Society can ſubſiſt without Government, whereby ſome are appointed to rule, and others to be ruled by them; ſo neither can the Church, which is a form'd ſtanding Society, continue without a Subordination of Officers, to teach and rule the other Members. For 'tis not to be imagin'd, that Chriſt in ſettling his Church ſhould leave it deſtitute of ſuch a Power, as was neceſſary to its Subſiſtence and Order, and without which it muſt unavoidably run to Ruin and Confuſion. Hence we read, that *God hath ſet ſome in his Church, firſt Apoſtles, ſecondarily Prophets, and thirdly Teachers*; 1 Cor. 12. 28. And in the Epiſtle to the *Epheſians* 'tis ſaid, *He gave ſome Apoſtles, ſome Prophets, ſome Evangeliſts, ſome Paſtors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Miniſtry, and for the edifying of the Body of Chriſt*; Eph. 4. 11, 12. Where Apoſtles are ſtill reckon'd in the firſt place, as referring not ſo much to the Priority of Time, as of Order and Dignity; they being the Governours and Superintendants over the reſt. And this Order is ſtill continu'd in the Church by a conſtant Succeſſion of Biſhops, Prieſts, and Deacons; and may it do ſo to the end of the World.

Again, 3*dly*, As my Father hath ſent me to appoint Teachers and Rulers in the Church, to ſupply the want of my Preſence; ſo I ſend you to ordain others in it, to ſupply the Defect of your Mortality. This Commiſſion was granted to the Apoſtles, the higheſt Order in the Church, to preſerve an orderly Succeſſion of lawful Paſtors and Teachers in it to the World's end. And this Power hath been deriv'd down to the Biſhops their Succeſſors herein ever ſince, whoſe ſole Office it is to admit Perſons into this Sacred Function, and to provide Paſtors *for all the Flock of Chriſt, over which the Holy Ghoſt hath made them Overſeers*;

Ἐπισκόπους, Biſhops, for ſo the Word ſignifies in the Original, and ſhould have been ſo tranſlated. Theſe are *to feed the Church of God* with ſound Doctrine and a holy Diſcipline, *under the great Biſhop and Shepherd of our Souls, who laid down his Life for the Sheep*; Acts 20. 28. Hence we read of the Holy Ghoſt's ſaying to the Apoſtles, *Separate me* Barnabas *and* Saul, *for the Work whereunto I have call'd them. And when they had faſted and pray'd, they laid their Hands on them, and ſent them away:* Acts 13. 2, 3. St. *Paul* conſtituted his Diſciple and Convert *Timothy* Biſhop of *Epheſus*, and wrote two Epiſtles to him, to furniſh him for the faithful Diſcharge of his Office; having under him all the Churches of the Proconſular *Aſia*. After which, *he left* Titus *in* Crete, *to ſet in order the things that were wanting, and to ordain Elders in every City:* which the Presbyters that were there before had no Authority to do. And this hath been ſo much the peculiar Province of Biſhops, from the days of the Apoſtles to this preſent time, that for the ſpace of fifteen hundred Years together, no one National Church ever accounted any Ordination to be valid, but what was confer'd by the Hands of Biſhops: tho ſome upſtart Sects have riſen of late, who take upon them to thruſt out Teachers in the World without Epiſcopal Orders, to the great diſturbance of the Church, and the peril of many Souls. Whoſe Preachings therefore have been juſtly reckon'd no other than the Pratings of Seducers and falſe Teachers, their Baptiſms no better than common Waſhings, and their Ordinations of no more force than the ſending any upon an ordinary Errand.

Laſtly, As my Father ſent me with a Promiſe of Aſſiſtance and Succeſs in the Work he gave me to do, even ſo ſend I you with the ſame Promiſe of Aſſiſtance and Encouragement in the Work whereunto I have call'd you. God the Father promis'd and foretold by the Prophet *Iſaiah* concerning the Meſſias, that he *ſhould ſee of the Travail of his Soul, and be ſatisfy'd; that by his Knowledg ſhould his righteous Servant juſtify many, and that the Work of the Lord ſhould proſper in his Hand*; Iſa. 53. 10, 11. All which he abundantly fulfill'd and made good to his Son, by the Increaſe of his Kingdom, by enlarging his Church, and daily adding thereunto ſuch as ſhould be ſav'd. The like Promiſe did Chriſt make, in ſending forth his Apoſtles and Diſciples, that *he would be with them always, to the end of the World*; *Mat.* 28. 20. that is, he would be with them, to direct and

and aſſiſt them in all their Difficulties, to comfort and ſupport them under all their Diſtreſſes, and to proſper and ſucceed them in all their Undertakings: which things were all perform'd to them, by giving them a Mouth and Wiſdom which all their Adverſaries were not able to gainſay or reſiſt; by enabling them to propagate the Goſpel, which he himſelf had planted, and to their great joy proſelyting all Nations to the Belief of it, notwithſtanding all the Oppoſition made againſt it.

The ſame Promiſe is continu'd ſtill to their Succeſſors in the Work of the Miniſtry, to whom he hath ſaid, that he will never leave nor forſake them, but will be always with them to the end of the World. And this Promiſe is made good to them by the Preſence and Aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit. And this will lead to

The Manner or Form uſed in Chriſt's ſending and aſſiſting his Apoſtles and Miniſters: and that is contain'd in the next words; *And when he had ſaid this, he breathed on them, and ſaith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghoſt.* Where his breathing on them was a Token or Emblem of Inſpiration, and ſignifies his infuſing a new Life and Vigour into them: for Breath is *Vehiculum Vitæ*, the Vehicle or Inſtrument of Life, it both gives and preſerves it; whilſt we have it, we are living Souls, but when 'tis gone, but dead Carcaſes: And as God breath'd into *Adam* the Breath of Life, whereby he receiv'd a natural Life, and became a living Creature; ſo Chriſt breathes into us his Holy Spirit, whereby we receive a ſpiritual Life, and ſo become new Creatures. Chriſt's breathing then on the Apoſtles, was an outward Sign of this inward Inſpiration. The Form of Words he uſed therein, was, *Receive ye the Holy Ghoſt*: which doth not ſignify here the actual giving or receiving of the Holy Ghoſt, for that did not come to paſs till the Day of Pentecoſt, which was a little after; but his bidding them to be ready to receive the Holy Ghoſt, and his breathing on them, was a fitting or preparing them to receive it: for which he will'd them to ſtay a while at *Jeruſalem*, and he would ſend the Promiſe of his Father upon them, and endow them with Power from on high; meaning, his viſible Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt, which actually came down upon them ſoon after, as we read, *Acts* 2. 1, 2. And this was a farther Confirmation of what he before told them, that *as my Father ſent me, ſo ſend I you*: ſignifying, that as Chriſt was anointed and conſecrated to his

Office

Office by the Holy Ghoſt's deſcending upon him in the ſhape of a Dove at his Baptiſm, *Acts* 10. 38. & *Mat.* 3. 16, 17. ſo the Apoſtles were conſecrated by the ſame Holy Spirit's coming down upon them in the ſhape of fiery cloven Tongues, at their Entrance upon the Miniſtry; *Acts* 2. 1. Hence thoſe words, *Receive the Holy Ghoſt*, are ſtill uſed in conferring of Holy Orders, by the laying on the Hands of the Biſhop, to intimate the pouring out of the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Ghoſt, to enable Perſons ordain'd to a faithful Diſcharge of their Office.

But what Benefit or Favour accrues to the Church by this their receiving the Holy Ghoſt? Why, that the following words declare to be the Remiſſion of Sins, or abſolving Penitents from the Guilt of them, in the Name, and for the Merits of Jeſus Chriſt: this is held forth in thoſe words; *Whoſeſoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whoſeſoever Sins ye retain, they are retain'd.* This is generally ſtiled the Power of the Keys, whereby the authoriz'd Miniſters of Chriſt have a power of admitting into, and excluding out of the Church, and thereby of opening and ſhutting the Kingdom of Heaven; the one by Abſolution, the other by Excommunication. 'Tis call'd in St. *Matthew* the power of binding and looſing, *Mat.* 16. 19. *Whatſoever thou ſhalt bind on Earth, ſhall be bound in Heaven; and whatſoever thou ſhalt looſe on Earth, ſhall be looſed in Heaven.* Sinners are ſaid to be ty'd and bound with the Chain of their Sins, to be holden with Cords, and reſerv'd in Chains of Darkneſs to the Judgment of the laſt Day. Now 'tis Chriſt alone, by his pardoning Grace, that can looſe thoſe Cords, take off thoſe Chains, and free them from all Obligation to future Puniſhments. The power of doing this he communicated to his Apoſtles, not to St. *Peter* only, as ſome fondly imagine, who make him the ſole Key-keeper of the Kingdom of Heaven; but to all the reſt alſo, and likewiſe to all that ſucceed them in their Office to the World's end. Hence our Church hath three Forms of Abſolution ſet down in her publick Liturgy. The firſt is Declarative, in the daily Abſolution that follows the Confeſſion; where the Prieſt is impower'd to pronounce and declare to the People, being penitent, the Abſolution and Remiſſion of their Sins. The ſecond is Optative, in the Form uſed in the Communion-Service; where the Prieſt prays to God, who hath promis'd Forgiveneſs of Sins to all that by Faith and Repentance turn to him, to have mercy upon

upon them, to pardon and deliver them from all their Sins, and to strengthen them in all Goodness. The third is Authoritative, in the Office for the Sick; where, upon the hearty Confession and Desire of the sick Person, the Priest is impower'd to say, *Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left Power in his Church to absolve all Sinners that truly repent and believe in him, forgive thee thy Offences; and by his Authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy Sins.* This Power was given for the Ease of dying and despairing Persons, which must be used with great Tenderness and Discretion; and the rather, because the Sentence duly pronounc'd here, will be ratify'd in Heaven, and determine their future and final State.

This is the Substance of the Gospel for this Day, which may teach us,

1. The Honour and Dignity of the regular Clergy, who are intrusted with so great a Power, being the Ambassadors of Christ, the Ministers and Stewards of holy Mysteries, and Fellow-workers with God; an Employment fit for Angels, and above the rate of common Mortals, to dispose of God's Mercy, and seal Pardons to humble Penitents: for which the Apostle would have them held in high estimation, and to be counted worthy of double Honour.

2. We learn hence the Duty as well as Dignity of Christ's Ministers; which is, to be diligent and faithful in their Office: *It is requir'd in Stewards* (saith the Apostle) *that they be found faithful.* And this is more especially requir'd of the Stewards in God's Houshold, faithfully to discharge so high a Trust, to dispense to all according to their need, and to give every one their Meat in due season, to restore them that fall, and comfort the Feeble-minded.

3. We may infer hence the People's Duty towards Christ's Ministers; which is, to receive their Instructions, and submit to their Authority. They that will not *hearken to the Church*, are by our Saviour's Orders to be put out of it, and to be counted *but as Heathen Men and Publicans*, Mat. 18. 17, 18. Christ counts the Honour and Observance paid to his Ministers as done to himself, and the Neglect of them as a Contempt of him: for *he that heareth you* (saith he) *heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.* In a word, beware of offending either of these, which draw on the just Indignation of the rest.

DIS-

DISCOURSE LXX.

The EPISTLE for the Second Sunday after *Easter.*

1 Pet. ii. 19, to the end.

This is thank-worthy, if a Man for Conſcience towards God endure Grief, ſuffering wrongfully: for what Glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your Faults, ye ſhall take it patiently? But if when ye do well and ſuffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God, &c.

THE Collect for this Day minds us of a double End of God the Father's giving us his Son; the one to be *a Sacrifice for Sin*, which he was by his Death; the other to be an *Enſample of godly Life*, which he was by his Reſurrection: and from both teaches us to pray for Grace, thankfully to receive the Benefit of his Death, and daily endeavour to follow the bleſſed Steps of his moſt holy Life. And becauſe his Patience under Sufferings was ſo remarkable, and worthy of Imitation,

The Epiſtle for the Day ſets before us that admirable Pattern; directing Chriſtians how to demean themſelves under all the Evils that may befal them in this Life.

That Sufferings are the Lot of good Men as well as bad, is a Truth ſo obvious in Experience, as to need no farther proof. *Job*, *David*, and *Daniel* in the Old Teſtament; our Saviour, his Apoſtles, and the primitive Chriſtians in the New, are plain Inſtances of this ſad Truth. Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, the Author and Finiſher of our Faith, endur'd the Croſs, and bid his Diſciples ever ſince to be ready to take it up, and follow him. He drank of the bitter Cup of God's Wrath, which doth not wholly paſs from us, but we ſtill ſip of that Cup which he took off to the very dregs. Sufferings then are the Portion of the beſt, as well as the worſt Men; which may put us upon Inquiry,

Firſt,

Firſt, Into the different Nature and Kinds of Sufferings.
Secondly, Into the different Cauſes and Reaſons of them.
Thirdly, Into the different Carriage and Behaviour of Men under them. And,
Fourthly, Into the different End and Reward of them.

For the different Nature and Kinds of Sufferings, they relate either to the Body, or Soul, or Eſtate, or good Name; in all which, both good and bad Men are liable to ſuffer.

For the Body, that is liable to Sickneſſes and Diſeaſes, to capital and ſanguinary Puniſhments, to Maiming and Mutilation of Parts, and to branding of them with Marks of Infamy.

For the Soul, that is liable to Grief and Sorrow, to Deſertion and Deſpair, to the Loſs of the Divine Favour, and to the Remorſe and Anguiſh of an evil Conſcience; which are ſome of the worſt kind of Sufferings.

For our Eſtate, that is liable to Loſſes and Croſſes, and Diſappointments, to Rapine and Oppreſſion, and many other ways of leſſening or impairing our Subſtance.

For our Name, that is liable to Slander, Detraction, Whiſpering and Defamation, and the like. To theſe different ſorts of Sufferings, all, even the beſt of Men, are in ſome meaſure obnoxious. But to come nearer to the Epiſtle for the Day, I proceed,

Secondly, To conſider the different Cauſes of theſe Sufferings. And here ſome ſuffer without a cauſe, being innocent of the Crime laid to their charge; and this is great Cruelty and Injuſtice. Others, by aggravating the Fault above the juſt Proportion and Meaſure of its Guilt, ſuffer more and beyond the Merits of the Cauſe; and this is unmerciful and unrighteous dealing. Others again ſuffer for a good Cauſe, as for the Name of Chriſt, or for Righteouſneſs ſake; and this is properly Perſecution: and if the Suffering amount to Death, or reſiſting unto Blood, 'tis what is truly call'd Martyrdom.

Now this is what St. *Peter* here ſaith *is thank-worthy, if a Man for Conſcience toward God endure Grief, ſuffering wrongfully.* If by adhering to our Duty to God, and keeping a good Conſcience toward him, we are at any time drawn into Sufferings, we need not be aſham'd or diſcourag'd; for

for this is highly pleaſing and acceptable unto God, who eſteems it an Act of Love and Obedience done to him, and will be ſure to remember and reward it: for ſo *thank-worthy* here imports, that ſo to ſuffer is not only worth Thanks, but worthy of a Reward. *If you love them that love you* (ſaith our Saviour) *what Thanks have you?* Luke 6. 32. that is, this merits no Return or Regard. But if you love them that hate you, and return Good for the Evil done to you; this is fit to be conſider'd and made up to you, and you ſhall be recompens'd at the Reſurrection of the Juſt.

But as ſome ſuffer without a Cauſe, and others in a good Cauſe, ſo there are others that ſuffer in and for a bad Cauſe: And this is ſo far from being thank-worthy, that 'tis worthy of all blame; *For what glory is it* (ſaith our Apoſtle) *if when you are buffeted for your Faults, you take it patiently?* If any fall under the juſt Puniſhments of his Vices and evil Deeds, he receives only the Wages due to his Sin, and feels no more than what is juſtly inflicted on him; ſuch Sufferings are not to be glory'd in, but to be aſham'd of, for they ſerve only to betray and expoſe his Guilt: and if any glory in them, he doth but glory in his Shame, which will end at laſt in Confuſion of Face. This our Apoſtle expreſſes elſewhere, by *ſuffering as a Murderer, or as a Thief, or as an Evil-doer, or as a Buſy-body in other Mens matters*; 1 Pet. 4. 15. cautioning all Chriſtians againſt ſuch Sufferings, as tending only to Shame and pitileſs Miſery. For what Honour is due to the Thief or the Traytor, who are hang'd for their Crimes? or who pities the Evil-doer or the Buſy-body, for being buffeted for their Faults? Such Sufferings can yield no Comfort here, and will turn to a worſe account hereafter: for they are but the Beginning of Sorrows, and the Fore-runner of future and far greater Puniſhments. *But if* (as the Apoſtle reſumes the Argument) *when ye do well, and ſuffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God:* yea, ſo acceptable, as to intitle us to the Crown of Martyrdom. And our preſent Sufferings of this kind, how heavy ſoever they may be, will add to and increaſe our future and eternal Weight of Glory. This is, in that forecited place, expreſs'd by *ſuffering as a Chriſtian*; that is, for Chriſt's ſake, for his Cauſe, and by his Command. And ſuch a one is there exhorted *not to be aſham'd* of ſuch Sufferings, but rather to look upon them as his Honour and Glory, to eſteem them as an Excellence, a Privilege, and a ſpecial Gift of God: *To you it is given to ſuffer*

for the Name of Chriſt, for the Spirit of Glory and of God reſteth upon you; Phil. 1. 29. 1 Pet. 4. 14.

Thus we ſee that even the beſt of Men are in this Life exercis'd with many Trials and Afflictions.

But, *Thirdly*, What is the Duty or Vertue to be exercis'd under them? Why that, we ſee, is Patience, Submiſſion to God's Will, and Perſeverance unto the end. *For even hereunto were ye called* (ſaith the Apoſtle in the next words) *becauſe Chriſt alſo ſuffer'd for us*: meaning, that our Calling as Chriſtians leads to Patience, and the End of our Chriſtianity is to be made conformable to Chriſt, as well in his Sufferings, as in his Glory; *Rom.* 8. 29. Now we are call'd to Patience, both by Chriſt's Precept, and by his Example. His Precept is, *in Patience to poſſeſs our Souls*, and to *run with Patience the Race that is ſet before us*: And that not only in the ſmooth and eaſy Paths of Proſperity, but in the rougher and harder Paths of Adverſity and Trouble. And in theſe *we have need of Patience, that having done the Will of God, we may receive the Promiſe*; Heb. 10. 36. St. *James* directs to *let Patience have its perfect Work*, Chap. 1. 4. that we may not faint, but rejoice in Tribulations. And St. *Peter* bids us, to all other Graces and Vertues to add *Patience*, which alone can carry us through the Difficulties of the World, and at laſt crown all. To which we are encourag'd by the *Example of* Job; and are likewiſe bid to *take the Prophets, who ſpake in the Name of the Lord, for Patterns of ſuffering Affliction, and of Patience*; James 5. 10, 11.

But we have here a higher Example of Patience than all theſe, *viz.* that of our Bleſſed Saviour, who call'd us hereunto by his Example as well as Precept; for *he ſuffer'd for us, leaving us an Example, that we ſhould follow his ſteps.* He endur'd the Rage and Cruelty of the bittereſt Enemies, the Tortures of the Croſs, and the Shame and Ignominy of the World, with an invincible Patience; taking off the bitter Cup with that humble Reſignation, *Father, not my Will, but thine be done.* Thus he hath taught us to pray, and by his own Example to practiſe.

And leſt any ſhould plead Innocence for an Exemption, or think Goodneſs to be privileg'd from Sufferings; the Apoſtle adds the greateſt Inſtance of Innocence and Goodneſs that the World ever had, affirming of our Saviour, that *he did no Sin, nor was any Guile found in his mouth.* And yet no Sufferings were thought too great for his Ene-

mies to inflict, or for him to endure: He who had no Guile found in his Mouth, found the Mouths of the Deceitful open'd upon him; and he who did no Sin, ſuffer'd the worſt and ſoreſt Puniſhments of Sinners. And that too without offering the leaſt Provocation, or entertaining the leaſt Thought of Revenge: for

When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he ſuffer'd, he threatned not. When he was reproach'd for all the Miracles and Acts of Kindneſs he had done, he made no Return; but as the Sheep before the Shearer is dumb, ſo he open'd not his Mouth. When his Enemies ſpit their Venom in his face, and pour'd out the Poiſon of Aſps that was under their Tongues, he ſeal'd up his Lips, and gave not an ill word to all their Calumnies; when he was crucify'd and barbarouſly uſed by them, he return'd nothing but Prayers for them, and interceded for their Pardon, even when they were doing the Injury. And what an unparallel'd Pattern of Patience hath he hereby given us? *He threatned not* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *but committed himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly.* Where two or three things may be obſerv'd: He did not take God's Work out of his hand, by revenging himſelf; nor did he ſeek Reparation from the partial and corrupt Judgment of earthly Powers, but committed himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly, and remitted his Cauſe to God's Tribunal.

1. I ſay, he would not take God's Work out of his hands by avenging himſelf; for *'tis written, Vengeance is mine* (ſaith God) *and I will repay:* He hath reſerv'd that to himſelf, and will not have it invaded by any of his Creatures, without his Order and Commiſſion. Accordingly, tho Chriſt, as God, might have executed Vengeance on all his Enemies, yet acting here in our human Nature as our Surety, he would not meddle with what belong'd only to the divine Nature. By whoſe Example, as well as Precept, we are taught not to revenge any Injury done to us, by our own Hands: *Dearly Beloved, avenge not your ſelves* (ſaith St. *Paul*) *but rather give place unto Wrath; and render to no man Evil for Evil, but ever follow that which is good, both among your ſelves, and to all Men:* Rom. 12. 19. 1 Theſſ. 5. 15. And as Chriſt would not revenge himſelf, ſo neither would he ſeek it from earthly Powers: not that this is always unlawful, for God hath appointed Magiſtrates, in many caſes, to be *Revengers to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil,* Rom. 13. 4. but to give us the higheſt Example

of

of Meekneſs, Peaceableneſs, and Patience. *I gave my Cheek to the Smiter* (ſaith he) *and hid not my Face from Spitting and Shame*; Iſa. 50. 6. and hath willed us, *if any ſmite on the right Cheek, to turn to him the other alſo; and if any ſue thee at the Law for thy Coat, let him have thy Cloke alſo*: Mat. 5. 39, 40. meaning, that we ſhould imitate him, in taking rather than in doing any wrong. This he did, to ſet before us a Pattern of Patience, to follow in the Courſe of our Lives; *Committing our ſelves*, as he did, *to him that judgeth righteouſly*: that is, leaving matters in many caſes to the great Judg of all the Earth, who will in his due time do all Men right.

Moreover, To inculcate this hard Leſſon upon us, the Apoſtle minds us, of what heavy things Chriſt hath bore for our ſake, in the next Verſe, *Who his own ſelf bare our Sins in his own Body on the Tree*: meaning, that Chriſt bore the Puniſhment of our Iniquities in his own Perſon on the Croſs, to the intent that we *ſhould die unto Sin*, as he died for it; and *live unto Righteouſneſs*, by the Power of his Reſurrection: eſpecially conſidering, that the Chaſtiſement of our Peace was upon him, and *by his Stripes we are healed*.

To all which, he adds a weighty Reaſon in the cloſe, taken from what we were by Nature, and what we are now reſtor'd to by Grace: *For ye were as Sheep going aſtray, but are now return'd to the Shepherd and Biſhop of our Souls*. Where we are taught,

1ſt, That by the firſt Tranſgreſſion we all erred and ſtrayed out of the way like loſt Sheep.

2dly, That 'tis our Duty and Safety to return. And,

3dly, That our Return muſt be to the great Shepherd and Biſhop of our Souls. Of each of which a word.

1ſt, I ſay, we are here taught, that by the firſt Tranſgreſſion we have all erred and ſtray'd like loſt Sheep. This we daily acknowledg in our Prayers, and have all great reaſon ſo to do; for we have all wander'd out of the ways of God's Commandments, and broken his Laws in Thought, Word, and Deed. We have erred by leſs, and ſtray'd by greater Sins; and by both loſing the way that leads to Life, we are become like loſt Sheep. Faults of Ignorance and Inadvertence are commonly call'd Errors, which having leſs of Guilt, uſually find more Mercy, and an eaſier Pardon than others: Sins of Wilfulneſs and Preſumption are call'd greater Strayings, which having more of the Will, are more provoking and more hardly forgiven; but both

are Aberrations from God's Ways, and the Paths of Life, and are no better than Wandrings in the Ways of Death and Deſtruction. And therefore both are to be confeſs'd, lamented and amended: which leads to the

2*d* Thing here taught ſuch Strayers, and that is to *return*; for what ſhould they do, who are out of the way, but return? for the longer they continue and go on in a wrong Way, the more they are bewilder'd, and the more dangerous and difficult will be their Return. Now as we go aſtray by our Sins, ſo muſt our Return be by Repentance; and according to the Meaſure and Guilt of our Sins, ſo are the Degrees of our Repentance to be. Sins of Wilfulneſs and Preſumption will require greater Pangs of Sorrow, than Sins of Weakneſs and Infirmity; as we ſee in *David* in the Old Teſtament, and *Peter* in the New: the Murder and Adultery of one, and the Denial of Chriſt in the other, coſt them the bittereſt Tears of Grief and Repentance to waſh them away. Return then we all muſt; but to whom? Why, that we are told,

3*dly*, Is *to the Shepherd and Biſhop of our Souls*: for where ſhould ſtraying Sheep go, but to a Shepherd; and loſt Sheep, but to him that *came to ſeek and to ſave them that were loſt?* The Prodigal Son, after all his wandring and riotous living, when he *came to himſelf*, return'd to his Father, and ſaid, *Father I have ſinned againſt Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be call'd thy Son*; Luke 15. 21.

And as we are to return to the *Shepherd*, ſo likewiſe to *the Biſhop of our Souls*. The Soul goes aſtray, as well as the Body; yea, the one often miſleads the other, and both are too apt to go out of the way that they ſhould go, and to wander in the By-paths of Sin and Error: If then we have forſaken the Doctrine or Diſcipline of the Chriſtian Church by Errors and Diviſions, or if we have left the Fellowſhip and Communion of the Church by Schiſm and Separation; we are to return to Chriſt the great Shepherd and Biſhop of our Souls, by returning to the inferiour Biſhops and Paſtors of his Church, appointed by him.

Thus I have briefly conſider'd the material Paſſages of this Epiſtle, which will afford us ſundry good Leſſons.

As, 1. Since Sufferings are the Lot and Portion even of good Men in this Life, let us learn to expect and prepare for them. The Sting and Bitterneſs of any Affliction is

a Surprize, when it comes upon us unawares, for then it ſeizes us unarm'd and unprovided to receive it; but when we count upon and look for it before-hand, we all have the Succours of Reaſon and Religion ready againſt it comes, and that will very much allay the Difficulty, and take off the Force of it. And therefore we ſhould, like Mariners, prepare for a Storm in the midſt of a Calm, and think of Adverſity in our greateſt Proſperity.

2. We are here taught the Leſſon of Patience, which is the Vertue to be exercis'd under all the Sufferings that befal us: *In Patience poſſeſs your Souls* (ſaith our Saviour) *Luke* 21. 19. as if a Man out of patience were out of the poſſeſſion of his Soul; and indeed an impatient Perſon is in ſome meaſure beſide himſelf, he loſes the Uſe of his Reaſon, and turns Religion out of doors. And therefore we have need of Patience to bear up like Men under the many Evils of this Life; to which end, let us conſider whence they come: Afflictions ſpring not out of the Duſt, but come from the Hand of a gracious God, who deſigns nothing but our Good in all his Corrections. Beſide, Patience will lighten the Burden, and ſooner remove it, than a peeviſh impatient Spirit, which adds to the Weight, and makes it more heavy and laſting. In ſhort, Afflictions borne with Patience will have an happy End and Iſſue, for they *work out for us an exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory*: which made St. *Paul* reckon the *Sufferings of this preſent time not worthy to be compar'd with the Glory that ſhall be reveal'd in us*; Rom. 8. 18.

But, 3. The principal Leſſon that we are to learn from hence, is to have regard to the Cauſe of our Sufferings; that they be only for a good Cauſe, and not the juſt Demerit of our Faults. To ſuffer for Chriſt, or for *Righteouſneſs ſake, is a Matter of great Joy, and will be attended with an* ample Reward; for *bleſſed are they that are perſecuted for Righteouſneſs ſake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Bleſſed are ye when Men ſhall revile and perſecute you, for great is your Reward in Heaven*; Mat. 5. 10, 11, 12. St. *Peter* adviſes all Chriſtians to take heed, that they *ſuffer not as Murderers, or Thieves or Evil-doers, or as Buſy-bodies in other Mens Matters*; *yet if any Man ſuffer as a Chriſtian, let him not be aſham'd*: 1 Pet. 4. 15. intimating, that 'tis no matter of Glory, but of Shame, to ſuffer for our Vices and Enormities. To ſuffer for invading another Man's Life or Subſtance, to be puniſh'd as an Evil-doer, or to die

the Death of a Malefactor, to be revil'd for a Busy-body, or a pragmatical Medler in other Mens Matters; thus to suffer, I say, can afford no Man any Satisfaction or Reward. In like manner, to suffer for breaking the Union and Communion of the Church, and rending the one Body of Christ by Schisms and Divisions, is to suffer as an Evil-doer, it being a transgressing of all the Precepts of Unity, and the Prohibitions of Divisions: and tho the Offenders of this kind are apt to cry out and complain of Persecution, yet have they as little reason, as any other Malefactors, who bear the just Punishment of their Crimes.

But if ye suffer for Righteousness sake, (saith our Apostle) *happy are ye*; and be not afraid of their Terrour, neither be troubled, only sanctify God in your Hearts, and labour to have and to keep a good Conscience, that whereas they speak of you as Evil-doers, they may be asham'd that falsly accuse your good Conversation in Christ: *For it is better, if the Will of God be so, that ye suffer for Well-doing, than for Evil-doing*; therein following the Example of our Saviour, *who suffer'd for us, the Just for the Unjust, that he might bring us to God:* 1 Pet. 3. 14, *&c.*

Lastly, Let the Sense of our returning to Christ, the great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls, and being made conformable to him in all our Sufferings in a good Cause, teach us to lift up our Heads, and rather to rejoice than repine at such Tribulations. Our Saviour himself was made perfect by Sufferings, he receiv'd not the Crown, before he had endur'd the Cross; and truly our way to eternal Life, is gladly to suffer with him. He that is too nice and tender to bear any Hardship for his Saviour, is not worthy of him, and shall never receive any Benefit by his Sufferings: such a one will soon make shipwreck of Faith and a good Conscience, and in time of Temptation will fall away. They that do so, will be disown'd by him in the last Day, and be doom'd for ever to depart from him; whereas by adhering to him in times of Trial and Persecution, we engage him in time of Need to stand by us; and if we suffer with him, we shall be glorify'd together: Which God grant, *&c.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE LXXI.

The GOSPEL for the ſecond Sunday after *Eaſter.*

St. John x. 11——17.

Jeſus ſaid, I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his Life for the Sheep; but he that is an Hireling, and not the Shepherd, whoſe own the Sheep are not, ſeeth the Wolf coming, and leaveth the Sheep and fleeth, and the Wolf catcheth them, and ſcattereth the Sheep, &c.

IN the Cloſe of the Epiſtle for this Day, we were minded of returning to the Shepherd and Biſhop of our Souls, from whom we have erred and ſtray'd like loſt Sheep.

In this Goſpel for the Day we are told who this Shepherd is, to whom we are to return, together with the Love he ſhews to, and the great Care he takes of his Sheep. *I am the good Shepherd* (ſaith Chriſt) ſent by my Father to that Office, in oppoſition to thoſe falſe Chriſts and Impoſtors, who pretend to the Meſſiahſhip without any Call or Commiſſion ſo to do: for Chriſt himſelf foretold that *falſe Chriſts and falſe Prophets ſhould ariſe, and come with Signs and lying Wonders, inſomuch that they would deceive many*; yea, *if it were poſſible, the very Elect*. For ſome would ſay, Lo! here is Chriſt; and others, Lo! there: One, that he is in the Field; another, that he is in the ſecret Chambers; a third, in the Conventicle: Of all which his Advice is; *Believe them not, and go not after them.* Theſe, in the foregoing part of the Chapter, he ſtiles, *Thieves and Robbers, that enter not by the Door into the Sheepfold:* meaning, that they come not with the Purity of Doctrine, or the Power of Miracles, to ſeal and confirm their Miſſion; *but climb up ſome other Way*, namely, by the Steps of Avarice, Ambition, and worldly Intereſt, deſigning not ſo much to feed, as to fleece and devour the Flock. Now, in

oppoſition to theſe, Chriſt ſtiles himſelf, *ver.7. The Door of the Sheep*, by which if any Man enter he comes ſafely into the Fold. And here he declares of himſelf, *I am the good Shepherd*; that is, the true Meſſias, that is come *to ſeek and to ſave them that were loſt.* This Title of Shepherd refers to the Cuſtoms of thoſe times, when theſe Words were ſpoken; for then the greateſt part of Mens Wealth and Subſtance conſiſted in Sheep, and the greateſt Perſons thought it not beneath them to watch and take care of their Flocks. *Jacob* and *David* are remark'd in Scripture for their Care and Diligence in keeping their Sheep. Hence Kings are often ſtil'd, the Shepherds of the People. The *Iſraelites*, who were God's peculiar People and Treaſure, were call'd the Sheep of his Paſture. Hence the antient Prophets deſcrib'd the Meſſias by the Character of a Shepherd, to which our Saviour here alludes, in ſaying, *I am the good Shepherd.*

But how did Chriſt diſcharge the Office, and make good the Character of a Shepherd? Why, the Duty and Office, we know, of a good Shepherd, is to take all due Care of the Sheep committed to his Charge. And that conſiſts chiefly in three things:

Firſt, In feeding them.
Secondly, In defending them. And,
Thirdly, In ſaving them from being loſt. All which things we ſhall find fully diſcharg'd by our Bleſſed Saviour towards Mankind, and therefore he juſtly deſerves the Character of *the good Shepherd.*

Firſt, I ſay, one main Duty and Office of a good Shepherd, is to feed the Flock, to put them into good Paſture, where they may have Graſs to ſatisfy their Hunger, and Water to quench their Thirſt; which every one knows is the Care of a good Shepherd. And this Care Chriſt hath abundantly taken for the feeding of his Flock, in providing all things neceſſary and convenient for them. He feeds their Bodys with daily and competent Food, and hath promis'd, if they ſeek firſt the Kingdom of God and the Righteouſneſs thereof, to add all other neceſſary Supports of Life to them. *The Lord is my Shepherd* (ſaith the Pſalmiſt) *therefore ſhall I lack nothing; he ſhall feed me in a green Paſture, and lead me forth beſide the Waters of Comfort*: Pſal. 23.

But

But Chriſt being chiefly the Shepherd and Biſhop of our Souls, his principal Care is imploy'd in feeding them. To which end, he hath provided all manner of ſpiritual and heavenly Food for their Suſtenance and Salvation. Becauſe *Man liveth not by Bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*; therefore he hath taken care to feed them with ſound Doctrine, and hath given to them the words of eternal Life: yea, he hath given them his own Body, to be the ſpiritual Food and Nouriſhment of their Souls, and ſpar'd not his own Life, but laid it down for his Sheep; thereby diſcharging the higheſt Office of a *good Shepherd, who* (as he tells us) *giveth his Life for the Sheep:* By which he hath given us his own Fleſh to eat, and his own Blood to drink, for the Health and Salvation of our Souls. In a word, he hath given corporal Bread to feed the Body, and the Bread of Life to feed the Soul, and by both ſhew'd himſelf to be the good Shepherd. Neither did this Paſtoral Care die with him, but continu'd after his Reſurrection, his Care then being rather increas'd than diminiſh'd; for the Commiſſion, which was only to the loſt Sheep of the Houſe of *Iſrael*, while he was alive, was enlarg'd and extended to the loſt Sheep of all the World, when he roſe again: *Go* (ſaith he) *and teach all Nations, and as my Father ſent me, ſo ſend I you*; Mat. 28. & John 20. He told St. *Peter*, that if he would ſhew his Love to him, he ſhould do it by feeding his Sheep, and repeated it three times, that he might take the greater Care about it. He likewiſe gave particular Charge to the reſt of the Apoſtles, and thoſe that ſucceeded them, to feed their particular Flocks, over which the Holy Ghoſt had made them Overſeers, promiſing to be with them always to the end of the World. Thus as he was a Prieſt, ſo was he a Shepherd for ever: for after he had in Perſon aſcended up into Heaven, he took care of the Flock which he had left behind him upon Earth; and that they might not be as Sheep without a Shepherd, he ſent down the Holy Ghoſt, who gave Gifts unto Men, making ſome Apoſtles, ſome Prophets, ſome Paſtors and Teachers, for the edifying his Church, and continuing his paſtoral Care over it to the World's end: by which he faithfully diſcharg'd the firſt Office of a good Shepherd, in feeding his Flock.

The *Second* is to defend them from all harm, to protect them from the Dog, the Fox, and the Wolf, who all lie in

in wait for the Sheep, the one to bite, the other to betray, and the third to devour them; and 'tis no ſmall part of a Shepherd's Care to ſecure them againſt all theſe: *He that is a Hireling indeed, and not the Shepherd, whoſe own the Sheep are not, ſeeth the Wolf coming, and leaveth the Sheep, and fleeth, and the Wolf catcheth them, and ſcattereth the Sheep.* Where by the Hireling is meant Impoſtors and falſe Teachers, who mind the Fleece more than the Flock; ſuch as are not the proper Shepherds of the Sheep, but entice and draw them out of others Flocks, to make a Gain or Market of them. Theſe, when they ſee any Danger approaching, forſake the Flock, and leave them to be ſcatter'd and divided to their utter Ruin: *The Hireling* (as he goeth on) *fleeth, becauſe he is an Hireling, and careth not for the Sheep*; that is, he hath little or no Love or Regard to the Flock, but is intent only on his own Intereſt and Advantage: and tho he may ſtick to them, while any thing may be gotten by them, yet he ſoon leaves them when any Danger approaches, or Intereſt fails. But Chriſt, who is the right Owner of the Sheep, better diſcharges the Office of a Shepherd; he is more tender of his Flock: and becauſe the Simplicity of Sheep, and the Innocence of Lambs, expoſe them to many Dangers, he takes care to guard and defend them againſt their Enemies: to which end, he warns them to *beware of Dogs*, to whom he compares falſe Teachers, *Phil.* 3. 2. Again, he cautions them againſt *Foxes*, to whom he likens falſe Prophets, *Ezek.* 13. 4. but above all, he warns them againſt *Wolves*, that come to them in Sheeps-clothing, merely to betray them to their utter Deſtruction. In a word, the watchful Eye of Divine Providence is ſo over the Flock of Chriſt, to guard the Sheep of his Paſture, that nothing ſhall harm them, if they are Followers of that which is good. And thus to defend and preſerve them from Evil, is the ſecond Part and Duty of a good Shepherd.

The *Third* is to keep them from ſtraying, from being ſtoln, or any other way of being loſt; which every good Shepherd will make it his great Care to do. To which end he will be often numbering of them, to ſee whether any be miſſing; and if ſo, he is very diligent in ſeeking that which is loſt, and ceaſes not till he find it. The Thief cometh not but to ſcatter, to ſteal, and to deſtroy; but the good Shepherd to keep the Flock together, to prevent their

their wandering, and to preserve Life, and *that they may have it more abundantly.*

Now in this sense too our Saviour hath quitted himself like a good Shepherd; for he *came to seek and to save them that were lost*, Luke 19. 10. which he hath effectually done, by recalling those that went astray, and reducing them to his Fold: for *all we* (saith St. *Peter*) *like Sheep were gone astray, but are return'd to the Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls.* And we find Christ himself telling his Father, *that of all those, which he had given him, he had not lost one*; John 18. 9. and thereby he faithfully discharg'd his Office, in feeding, defending, and saving his Flock, and might justly stile himself *the good Shepherd.*

This Character of himself he repeats again in the [illegible] Verse, with two other Marks of it, saying, *I am the good Shepherd, and know my Sheep, and am known of mine.*

By knowing his Sheep here, is meant his discerning or distinguishing them from others, which are none of his; for as Shepherds are wont to set some certain Mark on their Sheep, the better to know them by, so Christ sets his Seal upon his Flock, by which (as the Apostle tells us) *the Foundation of the Lord standeth sure, having this Seal, the Lord knoweth who are his*; 2 Tim. 2. 19.

Now Christ knows his Sheep, so as to distinguish them from others here, and likewise so as to separate and advance them above others hereafter.

1*st.* I say, when Christ saith, *He knows his Sheep*, he means that he can distinguish them from the Goats, and others that belong not to him. He knows his own Flock, *i. e.* who are his true and faithful Servants, and can discern them from the unsanctify'd Herd of reprobate and sinful Men. This is more than we can do, we cannot always know the Good from the Bad; we are often impos'd upon by the Sheeps Clothing, and many times take them for Sheep or Lambs of Christ's Fold, that inwardly are but ravening Wolves; we are often deceiv'd by Disguises and smooth Pretences, and cannot always see thro the Vizards of Hypocrites.

But Christ knows the Hearts of all Men, and cannot be impos'd upon by any outward Shows; all things are naked and open to him, and no Cloke or Covering can hide our Offences from him: he knows the Wheat from the Chaff, the Sheep from the Goats, and can distinguish the sound and good Christian from the false and disguis'd Hypocrite;

for

for he hath his Seal or Mark upon his People, and thereby knows who are his; he ſets the Seal of his Holy Spirit upon them, whereby they are mark'd up for his Flock, *and ſeal'd to the Day of Redemption. Hereby ſhall we know* (ſaith St. *John*) *that he abideth in us, by the Spirit that he hath given us*; 1 John 3. 24. And elſewhere, *He that hath not the Spirit of God, is none of his.* This is that inward Mark that is known to God only, and cannot ſo well be diſcern'd by us.

But there are ſome outward Signs or Badges, which may help us in ſome meaſure to know them alſo. As,

1. Chriſt himſelf hath told us, that hereby may we know, whether we are his Diſciples, if we have Love one to another. Love is the Characteriſtick Mark or Badg of his Followers, and we may know who are his by the Stamp of Charity. Again, we may know them,

2. By their Meekneſs and Patience. A Sheep, we know, is a very quiet and harmleſs Creature, it often takes, but never does any harm; 'tis the Wolf and the Tyger that are apt to tear and to devour, and 'tis the Guiſe of the Wicked and the Ungodly to ſtudy and to do Miſchief: whereas Chriſt's Followers labour to do all the Good they can to all Men, and never think of doing the leaſt Evil to any. Again,

3. We know the Sheep, of all Creatures, are moſt us'd to keep and go together, and are leaſt given to wander and ſtray from each other; 'tis the Wolf and the Goat that are wont to range, and the Creatures of Prey are moſt unwilling to be confin'd. In like manner, humble and good Chriſtians are moſt willing to keep together in the Service of God, and are leaſt inclin'd to break the Communion of Saints: whereas *they who ſeparate themſelves, are* (in St. *Jude*'s Phraſe) *ſenſual, having not the Spirit*, Jude *ver.* 19. By theſe and the like Marks, we may in ſome meaſure diſcover the true Flock of Chriſt, from the Herd of wicked and unreaſonable Men. But whether we can diſcern them or not, Chriſt knows his Sheep, and is able to diſtinguiſh them from the Goats even in this World.

But Secondly and chiefly, Chriſt ſo knows his Sheep, as to make a final and eternal Separation and Diſtinction between them and others in the World to come; for we read in *Mat.* 25. that he will ſet his Sheep on the Right Hand, and the Goats on his Left; receiving the former into Eternal Life, and ſending the latter into everlaſting Damnation.

Thus

Thus Christ is said to know his Sheep; but how is he known of them? for he saith, *I know my Sheep, and are known of mine*: why, that is, as Sheep are wont to know the Shepherd, partly by his Voice, and partly by his going. Accordingly, Christ tells us of his Flock that they *hear his Voice, and follow him.* Where he alludes to the Custom of Shepherds in the Land of *Jewry*, who (as History tells us) did not, as the Shepherds of our Days do, go behind and drive the Sheep before them; but they were wont to go before the Sheep, and by making a Sound, or calling them by Names known to them, their Flocks were taught to follow or come after them: and hereunto these Words of our Saviour allude, *My Sheep hear my Voice, and they follow me*, ver. 3.

1. Christ's Sheep know his Voice; that is, they hear his Doctrine, and obey his Call: they do not shut their Ears, or turn the deaf Ear as others do, to his Precepts, but both are open and ready to receive Instruction; saying, with *Samuel, Speak Lord, for thy Servant heareth.* Now the Voice of God is in the Holy Scriptures, as they are read and expounded to us by his Ministers; of whom he hath said, *He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that heareth me, heareth him that sent me.* So that 'tis by Attendance on God's Word, and Obedience to it, that we are said to hear his Voice; and by that chiefly we may know, whether we are his Sheep, or belong to his Flock: which may be farther known,

2. By *following him*: for Christ's Sheep not only hear his Voice, but *follow him*; that is, they tread in the Steps of his holy Life, and walk in the Way that he hath chalk'd out for them. Sheep, we know, are apt to follow their Leader, and to go where they see others go before them. And we have all so much of the Sheep in us, as to be led more by Example than Precept; which should teach us to set before us the best Examples, and to follow the best Guides. And because we cannot have a better, our Saviour hath propounded himself to be our Leader and Guide; willing us to *learn of him, for he is meek and lowly in Heart*; and in the whole Course of our Lives to be *Followers of him as dear Children.*

To encouage us hereunto, our Saviour acquaints us in the next Verse with the intimate Knowledg and Dearness, that is between the Father and him with respect to us: *As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down*

down my Life for the Sheep: that is, as the Father knoweth my Mind, and my Kindneſs towards you, for I know his Mind and Kindneſs to be the ſame; and 'tis by his Knowledg and Liking, that I lay down my Life for your Salvation; having perfect knowledg of his Will, and in this as in all other things yielding perfect Obedience to it. And then it follows, *Other Sheep I have, which are not of this Fold, them alſo I muſt bring, and they ſhall hear my Voice; and there ſhall be one Fold, and one Shepherd.* The Sheep that he then had, were thoſe of the *Jewiſh* Nation, to whom he was firſt ſent; *He came unto his own*, ſaith St. *John*, Chap. 1. 12. that is, to the *Jews*, whom he ſtiles *his own*, becauſe they were of his own Nation and Blood, and diſtinguiſh'd from others by many high and eminent Priviledges. Accordingly he told the Woman of *Canaan*, in the beginning of his Miniſtry, that he was *ſent only to the loſt Sheep of the Houſe of* Iſrael, Mat. 15. That his firſt Miſſion was to reduce them, by preaching Repentance and performing his Miracles among them. But here he tells us, that after his Reſurrection his Flock ſhould not be confin'd within the Pales of *Judea*, but that he had other Sheep that belong'd not to that Fold; meaning the *Gentiles*, and other Parts of the Heathen World, who were gone aſtray after their Idols: them alſo (ſaith he) muſt I bring in, that they may hear my Voice and follow me, becoming my Diſciples, by believing in, and obeying of me. And there ſhall be one Fold, that is, one Chriſtian Church all the World over, join'd together in one Communion and Doctrine, and united in one Shepherd as the chief Head and Paſtor of them all, to be govern'd by one Biſhop of their Souls, that is, Chriſt himſelf, whilſt he contin'd upon Earth, and after by his Apoſtles and their Succeſſors, to the end of the World.

This is briefly the Subſtance of the Goſpel for this Day, wherein we ſee how truly Chriſt call'd himſelf the good Shepherd, how well he knows his Sheep, and is known by them; together with the great Care he hath taken of them, not only while he was upon Earth, but ſince his aſcending up in Heaven.

The Uſe that I ſhall make of it, ſhall be,

1. To exhort all good Chriſtians to follow the Guidance and Conduct of this good Shepherd; and if at any time we have erred and ſtray'd from his Ways like loſt Sheep, as

we have all reason daily to confess, let us return again to this great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls, and watch more narrowly against all future Aberrations. Whilst we keep with him, we are safe in the Paths of Happiness; but if we leave him, we wander and walk in Bylways, where we lose our selves, and find nothing but our own Destruction.

2. Since there is but one Fold and one Shepherd, in which Christ hath united his whole Flock; let us all learn to keep together, and to preserve the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace. There is now *neither* Jew *nor* Gentile, *Bond nor Free, but they are all one in Christ Jesus*: let us not then divide and separate from one another, when God hath so closely link'd and join'd us together. To break into several Parties and Factions, and to set up separate Meetings and Communions, is to make new Partition-Walls, when Christ hath pull'd down the old; and consequently to divide the one Body of Christ. Our Saviour's last Prayer in the behalf of his Disciples, was, That *they all may be one, as thou, Father, art one in me, and I in thee, so they also may be one in us; that the World may believe that thou hast sent me*: John 17. 21, 22. And this Prayer of his was not only for his Disciples that were then alive and about him, but for all those that should after believe in his Name; that all who would be thought his Followers, should agree together in this Unity and godly Love, without any Division or Separation from each other. And this, he there intimates, would prove the best Demonstration of his Messiahship; for the World would sooner believe, that God had sent him, if his Disciples unite and agree together, than if they clash and fall into different Sects and Opinions. And as this was his last Prayer, so one of the last things he did, was to institute a Feast of Charity, to join them in one Communion; making it one of his last Requests to them, that they would often meet together at his Table, and there feed on his Body and Blood, in remembrance of what he had done and suffer'd for them. And by thus repairing together as one Flock to one Fold, he will hereafter separate his Sheep from the wandring Goats, setting the one at his right Hand in Bliss and Glory, and the other at his left in Shame and Misery. And when this chief Shepherd shall appear, we shall receive of him a Crown of Righteousness, that fadeth not away, reserv'd in Heaven for us: which God grant, *&c.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE LXXII.

The EPISTLE for the Third Sunday after *Easter.*

1 Pet. ii. 11——18.

Dearly Beloved, I beſeech you as Strangers and Pilgrims, abſtain from fleſhly Luſts, which war againſt the Soul: having your Converſation honeſt among the Gentiles; that whereas they ſpeak againſt you as Evil-doers, they may by your good Works, which they ſhall behold, glorify God in the Day of Viſitation, &c.

THE Collect for this Day lets us know, that Almighty God ſheweth to them that be in Error the Light of his Truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of Righteouſneſs; and from thence teaches to pray, that all who are admitted into the Fellowſhip of Chriſt's Religion, may eſchew thoſe things that are contrary to their Profeſſion, and follow all ſuch things as are agreeable to the ſame.

Suitable hereunto, the Epiſtle for the Day ſhews us what thoſe things are, which are contrary to our Profeſſion; and likewiſe what thoſe are, which are agreeable to the ſame: willing us to eſchew the one, and to follow the other, as the Sequel of this Diſcourſe will ſhew.

The Epiſtle begins with thoſe things that are contrary to our Profeſſion; and they are all *fleſhly Luſts*, from which we are exhorted to *abſtain: Dearly Beloved, I beſeech you as Pilgrims and Strangers, abſtain from fleſhly Luſts.* What thoſe fleſhly Luſts are, St. *Paul* tells us, *Gal.* 5. 19, 20. *The Works of the Fleſh are manifeſt, which are theſe, Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, Laſciviouſneſs, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Hereſies, Envyings, Murder, Drunkenneſs, Revellings,* and

and such-like: which things comprize all the corrupt Desires and Inclinations both of Soul and Body to all manner of Evil, as a slight View of them may easily inform us; call'd therefore *the old Man*, and *the whole Body of Sin*. That these things are contrary to our Profession, will be evident to any, who considers that our Christian Profession calls us to all manner of Purity and Holiness; whereas these lead Men to the grossest Impurity and Defilement. They are contrary to the Nature and Will of that God, whom we profess to worship, who is of purer Eyes than to behold the least Iniquity. They are contrary to the Purity profess'd in Baptism, and the Vow and Covenant made therein, when we were wash'd from all Pollution in that Laver of Regeneration. In a word, they are contrary to the Nature, the Laws, and the whole Design of Christianity.

But how are we to abstain from these fleshly Lusts? Why, not only outwardly in the overt Acts, but inwardly in all the Desires, Motions, and Occasions of them; hating the Garment spotted with the Flesh, and avoiding all the Appearances of Evil.

Again, (2.) We must abstain not only from this or that fleshly Lust, which we can well enough dispense with, but wholly and intirely from all; not allowing our selves in any beloved Vice, nor sparing any one Branch, but laying the Ax to the very Root, and cutting down the whole Body; for one mortal Enemy may do a Man as much harm, as a whole Army, and a Viper in the Bosom may sting and wound more, than many others farther off.

(3.) We must abstain from fleshly Lusts truly and sincerely, not barely from a Principle of Fear and Shame; for that will only adjourn the Temptation to a fairer Opportunity, and then gratify it with greater greediness: but from a Principle of Love to God, and Hatred to Sin, and that will keep us from it as well in secret as in publick View.

Lastly, We must abstain from them not only now and then, but always; not returning with the Dog to his Vomit, or the Sow that was washed to her wallowing in the Mire; but keeping a constant and unspotted Purity, and so turn unto God, as never to return again to Folly.

This Abstinence from fleshly Lusts the Apostle here backs with two weighty Considerations:

1st, From our State and Condition here, which is not that of Citizens or Inhabitants, but of Pilgrims and Stran-

gers. Our City and Country is elſewhere, and we are now only travelling and making towards it; and therefore we are not to take up with the empty Pleaſures and Satisfactions of this Life, where we have no abiding City, but to aſpire after the nobler Joys and Delights of Heaven, where our Country and Converſation is, and where our Happineſs muſt be.

2dly, From the Danger and Damage that fleſhly Luſts do the Soul, for they wound and war againſt the Soul: they hurt the animal Soul, by impairing Life, and ſhortning our days; but they chiefly miſchief the rational Soul, by debaſing the Honour and Dignity of it, by deſtroying the Peace and Purity of it, by taking away the Freedom and Liberty of it. In a word, they hurt the preſent Tranquillity, and hinder the eternal Salvation of the Soul. Theſe things are farther enlarg'd and urg'd in the *Practical Expoſition of the Church-Catechiſm*, Part 1. Diſc. 13. to which I refer the Reader, and proceed,

Secondly, From the things contrary to our Profeſſion, to the things agreeable to the ſame. And of this kind the Apoſtle here mentions ſix or ſeven, *viz.* Honeſty in our Dealings, Submiſſion to Superiours, the right Uſe of our Chriſtian Liberty, a general Reſpect to all Men, a particular Love to the Brotherhood, the Fear of God, and Honouring the King. Theſe things agree well with our Chriſtian Profeſſion, and not only anſwer, but adorn it; which we are therefore call'd upon to follow, as will appear by ſpeaking ſomething particularly to each. And,

(1.) Of Honeſty in our Dealings one with another. This is held forth in the next words, *ver.* 12. *Having your Converſation honeſt among the Gentiles, that whereas they ſpeak againſt you as Evil-doers, they may by your good Works, which they ſhall behold, glorify God in the Day of Viſitation.* Where by having our Converſation honeſt, we are to underſtand the rendring to all their Dues, or paying to every one their own, without taking or with-holding any thing from another. To this appertain Truth in our Words, Conſtancy to our Promiſes, Fidelity in our Bargains, Faithfulneſs in Truſts, with all other known Acts of Juſtice and Fair-dealing: theſe are often in Holy Scripture preſt upon us, and recommended to us as the Ornament and Glory of our Chriſtian Profeſſion. St. *Paul* urges them with great Earneſtneſs upon the *Philippians*, Chap. 4. 8. *Finally, Brethren,*

thren, whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt; if there be any Vertue, if there be any Praiſe, think on theſe things: for they are lovely in themſelves, and carry a *good Report* with them. All Men commend juſt Dealing, and report of them that practiſe it, that God is in them of a truth. Whereas Diſhoneſty and Double-dealing are ſcandalous and diſhonourable, they bring an evil Report, and diſparage both our Perſon and Profeſſion. So the Apoſtle intimates here, that *whereas they ſpeak againſt you as Evil-doers*; implying, that fraudulent and falſe Dealings open Mens mouths, and make them ſpeak all manner of Evil of them that practiſe them. And therefore the Apoſtle cautions Chriſtians againſt them, ſaying, *Let no Man defraud or go beyond his Brother in any matter; for God and Man are the Avengers of thoſe things*; 1 Theſſ. 4. They brand Men with Shame, and fill them with Confuſion of Face. For which reaſon, we are exhorted here to the contrary Courſes of Vertue and Honeſty, for the honour of our ſelves and our Profeſſion; and likewiſe, that Men by the *good Works they ſhall behold in us, may glorify God in the Day of Viſitation*: that is, may think and ſpeak honourably of the Ways of God, when they are under any Trouble or Tribulation for forſaking them.

(2.) Another thing we are to follow, as agreeable to our Profeſſion, is Submiſſion to Governours, both ſupreme and ſubordinate. This we have in the next words, *Submit your ſelves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's ſake, whether it be to the King as ſupreme, or unto Governours, as unto them that are ſent by him, for the Puniſhment of Evil-doers, and for the Praiſe of them that do well.* ver. 13. Where by *ſubmitting to every Ordinance of Man*, is meant Obedience to all human Laws that are not contrary to the Laws of God. And this Obedience is here requir'd *for the Lord's ſake*; that is, partly by virtue of God's Command, who hath put this Duty upon us; and partly by virtue of his own Authority, with which he hath inveſted them, as his Miniſters and Vicegerents: in both which reſpects St. *Paul* wills us *to be ſubject not only for Wrath*, or Fear of Puniſhment, *but for Conſcience ſake*; Rom. 13. 5. And this Obedience is to be paid firſt to the King, as the Supreme Ruler and Governour of the Country where we live; and ſecondly, to inferiour Governours and Officers, who are ſent and commiſſion'd by him, as acting by his Authority. Both which are urg'd upon us from the two great Ends and De-

ſigns of Government; which are, *the Puniſhment of Evil-doers, and the Praiſe of them that do well*: that is, for the ſuppreſſing of Vice, and the encouraging of Vertue; that we may live quiet and peaceable Lives in all Godlineſs and Honeſty.

That this is agreeable to our Profeſſion, we may learn from the next words; *For ſo is the Will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to ſilence the Ignorance of fooliſh Men*: meaning, that the Chriſtian Religion obliges us to this Submiſſion to all our Superiours, ſo that to live in obedience and ſubjection to them, is to act ſuitable to the Rules of Chriſtianity; and to do otherwiſe, is to act quite contrary to them. And becauſe Diſobedience to the Higher Powers may juſtly reflect upon our Chriſtian Profeſſion, as encouraging Faction and Sedition, and ſo may charge Chriſtians for turbulent Perſons, that ſeek to turn the World upſide down; therefore the Apoſtle wills us by no means to be wanting in our Duty and Subjection to Superiours, but to be more willing to ſuffer under than to diſobey them; that we may ſtop the mouths of Gainſayers, and ſilence the Ignorance of fooliſh Men, taking off all occaſions of Reproach, and leaving them nothing juſtly to object againſt us. Which will lead,

(3.) To another thing agreeable to our Profeſſion: and that is, the right Uſe of our Chriſtian Liberty, deliver'd in theſe words, *ver.* 16. *As free, and not uſing your Liberty for a Cloke of Maliciouſneſs, but as the Servants of God.* Where the Apoſtle acknowledges our Freedom from the *Moſaick* Yoke, but would not have it ſtretch'd ſo far, as to think it a Freedom from the Yoke of Government. There were ſome in the Apoſtles days, as there are ſtill in ours, that urg'd Chriſtian Liberty, as an Immunity from Obedience to humane Laws; and becauſe they were freed from the Rites and Ceremonies of *Moſes*'s Law, which only ſhadow'd out things to come, would therefore think themſelves freed from obſerving the Rules of Order and Decency enjoin'd in the Chriſtian Church. Now this is to uſe their Liberty for a Cloke of Maliciouſneſs; for this Pretence is quite contrary to the Precepts and Practices of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, who in all ſuch lawful and indifferent things, rather exceeded than fell ſhort in their Obedience to them; as might be eaſily prov'd in many Particulars. This Abuſe of Chriſtian Liberty occaſion'd many and great Reflections upon Chriſtianity in the Apoſtles time, which made them

take

take no ſmall pains in vindicating it from ſuch unjuſt Aſperſions: and the like Reflections have been too juſtly rais'd againſt it, by the Stubbornneſs and Diſobedience of ſome Chriſtians in our days under the ſame pretence, with whom no leſs pains hath been taken to ſet them right in this matter. In ſhort, Submiſſion and Obedience to the Higher Powers is a thing agreeable to our Profeſſion, being enjoin'd by the Doctrine of Chriſt and his Apoſtles; and all Refractorineſs and Diſobedience to good Laws, is directly oppoſite to it, being condemn'd by both: and therefore, as we pray this day, we are to follow the one, and eſchew the other. For to ſet up a Pretence of Liberty againſt it, is to uſe it for a Cloke of Maliciouſneſs: to prevent which, St. *Peter* here directs us to uſe it, *as the Servants of God*; that is, to remember ſtill that we are under his command, and to admit thoſe Bounds and Reſtraints which he hath ſet to our Liberty: among which, that of Duty and Obedience to Superiours is one of the chiefeſt. We are free in all things, wherein God or his Miniſters have not interpos'd; but where they have ty'd us up by their Precepts or Prohibitions, there we are to obey God in the firſt place, and his Miniſters for his ſake. To do this, is to act becomingly to our Profeſſion; to do otherwiſe, is to blemiſh and beſpatter it.

(4.) Another thing agreeable to our Profeſſion, is the giving to every Man the Honour due to him. This is here recommended to us in theſe words, *ver.* 17. *Honour all Men.* Honour in general is the Acknowledgment of ſome Excellency in another, and the behaving our ſelves towards him accordingly: And becauſe there are different Degrees of Worth and Excellency in ſundry Perſons, as ſome are above others in Parts and Learning, others in Place, Dignity, Office, and the like; therefore different Meaſures of Honour are to be meted out to them. God is to be honour'd firſt and above all, by reaſon of his tranſcendent Excellencies and Perfections: Good Men for their Vertue and Goodneſs are to be honour'd and reſpected above looſe and profligate Perſons: Men in Place and Authority above thoſe that are ſubjected to them. And generally all Superiours in Dignity and Deſert, are to have a greater ſhare of Honour, than thoſe that are inferiour to them. This, Juſtice and Equity requires of us, being the giving to every Man his due; and is a Decency in Religion, as well as in Good Manners.

But there is ſome kind of Excellency or other granted to all Men: for they have all the Image of God ſtamp'd upon them, they are all Partakers of the ſame human Nature, they all came out of the ſame Hands, and were made for the ſame Ends; having Bodies conſiſting of the ſame Parts, and Souls endow'd with the ſame Faculties, being alike wonderfully made and framed in both: And upon that account, ſome kinds and degrees of Honour are due to all Men. For ſetting aſide ſome few outward Differences of Fortune, Attire, Attendance, or other worldly Advantages, we are all equal in Nature; and as we expect to receive Honour and good Uſage our ſelves, ſo are we to be as ready to give it to others. So that this Precept of honouring all Men, forbids the deſpiſing of any, even the meaneſt Perſon: *Why doſt thou ſet at nought thy Brother?* ſaith St. *Paul*; and *he that deſpiſeth the Poor, diſhonoureth his Maker*, ſaith *Solomon*. In a word, to give to all Men the Honour due to them, well ſuits our Profeſſion; and to do otherwiſe, is to ſtain and diſgrace it. And as we are thus to *honour all Men*, ſo are we here commanded,

(5.) To have a more particular Love to our Chriſtian Brethren. This is held forth to us in theſe words, *Love the Brotherhood.* Where two things are to be briefly enquir'd into, *viz.* Who we are to underſtand by the Brotherhood, and what is the Love that is to be paid to them.

For the firſt, there is a Brotherhood by Nature appertaining to all Mankind; in which ſenſe all Men are Brethren, partaking of the ſame human Nature, having the ſame Father in Heaven, and deſcending from the ſame earthly Parents, *Adam* and *Eve*. And there is a Brotherhood by Grace, contracted by a new Birth in Baptiſm; whereby we become Brethren in Chriſt, begotten by the ſame Spirit, profeſſing the ſame Faith, and born to the ſame Inheritance; the former belongs to us as Men, the latter as Chriſtians; and this latter is the Brotherhood that we are here principally requir'd to love; for tho there is a general Love due to all Mankind, as partaking the ſame Nature, yet there is a more particular Love due to our Chriſtian Brethren, as profeſſing the ſame Faith, and being Members of the ſame myſtical Body of Chriſt. And in this ſenſe it is, that we find Brethren ſo often mention'd by the Apoſtles in the New Teſtament.

But what is the Love that we are here commanded to pay them? Why, that conſiſts partly in the inward Affection

fection of the Heart, in wiſhing all Good to them; and partly in the outward Expreſſions of the Hand, in doing them all good Offices, as Opportunity offers. Both which the Apoſtle would have in ſome meaſure *done to all Men, but more eſpecially to thoſe of the Houſhold of Faith*; Gal. 6. 10. The Seat of all true Love is in the Heart, and all that we ſay or do, if it come not thence, is rather the Effect of Hypocriſy than any true Love. And therefore our Love to the Brethren muſt be ſeated there, and proceed from thence; this is call'd *Love unfeigned*, 1 Pet. 1. 22. *Love out of a pure Heart*, 1 Tim. 1. 5. and *Love without Diſſimulation*, Rom. 12. 9. But as true Love is rooted in the Heart, ſo muſt it ſprout forth and appear by the Hand; as *Jehu* ſaid to *Jonadab*, *Is thy Heart right? if it be, then give me thy Hand.* True Love, like a true Faith, muſt diſcover it ſelf by good Works, or elſe both will be found but cold and dead. He does not love the Brotherhood, whatever he may pretend, that is not willing to embrace all Opportunities of doing good to the Souls, the Bodies, the Credit and Eſtate of his Chriſtian Brethren: to do ſo, is highly agreeable to our Chriſtian Profeſſion, of which Love is the Badg; and to do otherwiſe, is groſly to thwart and contradict it.

(6.) The *Fear of God* is another thing here preſcrib'd, as agreeable to our Profeſſion; and that conſiſts in ſuch an awful Dread of the Divine Majeſty, as makes us unwilling to offend him: 'tis grounded on a due and deep Senſe of his infinite Greatneſs, Power, Wiſdom, Goodneſs and Truth; which things well conſider'd will ſtrike the Mind with ſuch a Fear and Reverence of him, as will incline us to pleaſe, and keep us from diſpleaſing of him. And therefore a good Man is deſcrib'd to be one that *feareth God*; and a bad Man to be one that *hath no Fear of him before his eyes.* So that to be true to our Profeſſion, we muſt endeavour always to keep up this Fear of God, and to avoid every thing that is inconſiſtent with it.

Laſtly, To this Fear of God is here coupled the *Honouring of the King.* Both theſe muſt go together, to compleat the Character of a good Chriſtian; for either alone, or in oppoſition to the other, will never denominate any ſuch. To ſet up the Fear of God as a Pretence for diſhonouring of the King, is the Sin of Diſloyalty; and to make the honouring of the King a Plea for diſhonouring of God, is Profaneneſs and Hypocriſy. The Apoſtle here hath ſet us

right in this matter, by joining the Fear of God and the Honour of the King together; the one having a neceſſary Connexion and Dependence on the other. We are to fear and honour God for his own ſake, and we are to fear and honour the King for God's ſake; he having deriv'd his Power and Authority upon him for our Good. God hath ſtiled them *his Anointed*, and given them his own Name, *I have ſaid ye are Gods*, to raiſe them above the level of the World, and to procure to them the Honour and Veneration of Mankind; and we cannot truly honour God, without honouring of them.

For a Cloſe then of this Diſcourſe, let us carefully eſchew all ſinful Luſts, as contrary and diſagreeable to our Profeſſion; and follow Honeſty in our Dealings, Submiſſion to our Superiours, with a right Uſe of our Chriſtian Liberty; giving Honour to all Men, Love to our Brethren; and joining to theſe the Fear of God, and Honouring the King, as things agreeable to the Religion we profeſs, and anſwering the Ends and Deſigns of it.

To this we ſtand oblig'd by the Decency of the thing, it being highly fit and reaſonable, that we ſhould be and do as we pretend: and likewiſe by the great Indecency of the contrary; it being groſly abſurd and unbecoming, to pretend to great things, and to do nothing like it. Again,

The Honour of our Perſons and Profeſſion requires us to walk worthy of both. When we live by the Rules and Precepts of Chriſtianity, we bring Credit to our Religion and our ſelves, whereas both are diſparag'd by an unſuitable Converſation; yea, we reflect Diſhonour upon Chriſt, and bring an evil Report upon his Ways, when we act contrary to what we profeſs, and wear his Livery only as a Cloke to hide our ſinful Practices.

Laſtly, Our own Intereſt obliges us to act ſuitable to our Profeſſion; it being a matter of great Comfort to us here, and of a much greater Reward hereafter: for ſuch will ſurely find an entrance into their Maſter's Joy, and be made for ever happy with him; when the titular and nominal Chriſtian, that uſurps the Name of Chriſt without living anſwerable to it, ſhall be for ever excluded from his Preſence, and have his Portion with Hypocrites and Unbelievers: which will concern us above all things to prevent.

DIS-

DISCOURSE LXXIII.

The GOSPEL for the Third Sunday after *Easter.*

John xvi. 16——23.

Jesus said to his Disciples, A little while and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while and ye shall see me; because I go to the Father. Then said some of the Disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us? A little while and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while and ye shall see me. We cannot tell what he saith, &c.

THE time of our Blessed Saviour's returning to his Father drawing nigh, he thought fit to impart it to his Disciples, and to prepare them for it; to which end he here drops it to them, as it were in a Riddle or dark Saying, which puzzled them at first, and put them hard to it to find out the meaning. *Jesus said unto them, A little while and ye shall not see me: and again, A little while, and ye shall see me.* Which words seem to make him a sort of Apparition, that would disappear awhile, and then be seen again; and after that appear again, and then vanish away. The Sense whereof the Disciples could not presently apprehend. *A little while and ye shall not see me; and again, a little while and ye shall see me.* The words are ambiguous, and admit of a double Construction, as they relate either to his Resurrection or Ascension. As they relate to his Resurrection, the Sense of them is this: Within *a little while* I shall be put to death, and be taken from you; during which time being laid in the Grave, and under the Powers of Death and Darkness, *ye shall not see me.* And again, *In a little while after*, that is, after three Days, I shall rise again, and then *ye shall see me.* Tho the Shadow of Death and the Grave may hide my Face from you awhile, yet in a little time I shall be lifted up out of the Grave, and then will I lift up the Light of my Countenance upon you, and you shall see me again. In this Sense

the

the words are much of the ſame Import with thoſe he ſpoke to the *Phariſees*, who asking a Sign of him, ſaid unto them, *Diſſolve this Temple* (meaning, the Temple of his Body) *and in three Days I will raiſe it up*; John 2. 19. Where by the razing or diſſolution of the Temple, was meant the crucifying and putting our Saviour to death, by which the Diſciples loſt the ſight of him; and by raiſing up this Temple again was meant the renewing or reſtoring him to Life again, by which they recover'd the ſight of him, and ſaw him again: And all this was not long a doing, no longer than three Days, which made our Saviour ſpeak of both as of Matters tranſacted in a little time, a little while; that is, during the ſhort time of my lying in the Grave, you ſhall not ſee me. And again, *a little while*, that is, within the ſpace of three Days, and ye ſhall ſee me; for 'tis not poſſible for me to be held by Death, being to ariſe and go to my Father.

But there is, *2dly*, another Senſe of theſe words, and perhaps more ſuitable to the Occaſion of their delivery; and that is, as they relate to our Saviour's Aſcenſion into Heaven, and ſo the meaning of them muſt be this: Within *a little while*, I muſt leave the World, and go to my Father that ſent me, and *then ye ſhall not ſee me.* And again, in *a little while* after, I ſhall come again to judg the Quick and the Dead; and then *ye ſhall ſee me.* And our Saviour's adding thoſe words as a Reaſon, *Becauſe I go to the Father*, ſeems to refer the words more to this ſenſe, than the former; for Chriſt's going to the Father was not by his Reſurrection, but by his Aſcenſion: And 'twas uſual with our Saviour to expreſs his Aſcenſion in that phraſe, *I go to my Father* (ſaith he) *and your Father*, John 20. 17. And elſewhere, *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the World:* Again, *I leave the World and go to the Father.* So that by theſe Expreſſions, the Senſe of the Words I am diſcourſing of ſeems to be this: A little while, during my ſhort ſtay in the World, ye ſhall ſee me; in a little while I ſhall leave the World, and ye ſhall not ſee me, becauſe I go to the Father: And again, In a little while I ſhall come back to you, to receive you to my ſelf, and then you ſhall ſee me again. Howbeit,

The Diſciples, it ſeems, were then ſo ſlow of Underſtanding, that they knew not the meaning of thoſe ſayings; for the next Verſes tell us, that *ſome of them ſaid among themſelves, What is this that he ſaith unto us? A little while and ye ſhall not ſee me: And again, A little while and ye ſhall ſee me;*

becauſe

because I go to the Father. They said therefore, What is this that he saith, a little while? We know not what he saith. Where the manner of expressing it, by doubling and trebling the Matter in question, show'd their gross Ignorance and Misunderstanding of it, that they knew nothing of the matter, and could not tell what to make of it.

That which we may observe from hence is, the Manner of our Saviour's dealing with and instructing of his Disciples; which was many times by Parables, Proverbs, and dark Sentences, which they did not presently apprehend: and this he did not so much to puzzle, as to put them upon Study and Meditation, to exercise their Parts, and to excite them to a fuller and farther Search into the Truths deliver'd to them. Plain and easy Truths, like plain Food, are apt to be despis'd, as not worthy of any great notice or regard; and therefore he mix'd something of difficulty with his Doctrine, to employ their Minds, and to put them upon a farther Enquiry into it. Accordingly we find, when he instructed his Followers in the Duty of Hearing by the Parable of the Sower, they came to him and asked him, saying, *What may this Parable be?* And in the Parables of the Tares, the Vineyard, and other Parables, they came and prayed him; saying, Master expound to us these Parables: which he readily did, to inform their Judgments, and direct their Practices. In like manner, the Disciples here ignorant of Christ's meaning, were willing to be instructed in it: so the next words declare; *Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among your selves, of that I said, A little while and ye shall not see me, and again, a little while and ye shall see me?* Where finding them sollicitous about the understanding of his words, he thought fit by degrees to give them satisfaction. Indeed, we cannot be more willing to learn than he is to teach; and if we will do the Will of our Heavenly Father, we shall surely know the Truths that be of God. Christ delights to communicate his Mind to docile and tractable Disciples; and if we are desirous to know, he is ever ready to discover to us the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven: *The Meek he will guide in Judgment*, (saith the Psalmist) *and the Humble he will teach his way*; Psal. 25. 'Tis but to open our Hearts to desire, our Mouths to ask, and our Ears to hear, and we shall not want Knowledg enough to make us wise unto Salvation: *For the Secrets of the Lord are with them that fear him, and he will reveal them his Covenant.*

But

But what was our Saviour's Anſwer to their Enquiry about this matter? Why, it was no direct Anſwer to what they ask'd, but yet it was ſuch as included that, and ſomewhat more, as we may ſee by his following Anſwer in theſe words: *Verily, verily I ſay unto you, that ye ſhall weep and lament, but the World ſhall rejoice; and ye ſhall be ſorrowful, but your Sorrow ſhall be turn'd into Joy.* Where he intimates to them his going away from them, and that that would be a time of Mourning and Lamentation to them. The World indeed (he tells them) would rejoice, as hoping to gain ſome Advantage upon them by his Abſence. *Solomon* tells us, that *there is a time for all things under Heaven, a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance*; Eccleſ. 3. 1, 4. Now Chriſt's withdrawing from his Church is the time of Weeping and Lamentation to them, not only becauſe they loſe the Company of their beſt Friend, but becauſe they are then expos'd to the Rage and Fury of their worſt Enemies. The Church is in Scripture often ſtil'd the Spouſe of Chriſt, who is ſaid to be married to it. Now nothing, you know, is more irkſom to a Spouſe, or harder to be borne, than the Abſence of the Husband, eſpecially if it be long, and the Return uncertain; this overwhelms her with Sorrow, and makes her reſtleſs and impatient. Such was Chriſt's leaving his Diſciples, and ſuch in ſome meaſure is his preſent Abſence from his Church; a time of Danger and Diſtreſs, and conſequently a time of Trouble, and of great Thoughts of Heart. When the Diſciples of *John* ask'd our Saviour, why they and the *Phariſees* faſted often, and his Diſciples faſted not, he anſwer'd them, that their time of Faſting and Mourning was not yet come; for *can the Children of the Bride-chamber* (ſaith he) *mourn, while the Bridegroom is with them? But the Days will come, when the Bridegroom ſhall be taken from them, and then ſhall they faſt*; Matth. 9. 15. Where the time of Chriſt's abode upon Earth with his Diſciples, is compar'd to the celebrating of a Marriage-Feaſt, and that is rather a time of Joy, than of Faſting and Mourning; but when the Days came of his departing from them, and going to his Father, then was the time of Sorrow and Faſting. Accordingly, when our Saviour told his Diſciples, that *a little while and ye ſhall not ſee me*; he immediately adds, *Verily, verily I ſay unto you, that ye ſhall weep and lament.* Meaning, that they would ſee much Trouble, when they had loſt the ſight of him, and find cauſe enough to be ſorry and bewail his departure:

ture: and this he asserts with the double Asseveration of verily, verily, to shew the Certainty, as well as the Sadness of it. The main Comfort of their Lives depending upon the Sight and Presence of their Saviour, his removing from them, could not but be a Matter of Tears and Grief. And as this was a time of Sorrow and Sadness to the Disciples, so was it a time of Joy to their Enemies; *Ye shall weep and lament* (saith Christ) *but the World shall rejoice*: They will be glad to see you left destitute, that you may lie at their mercy, and they have their Will upon you. 'Tis the Joy of the Wicked to do mischief. *David* complain'd of his Enemies, that they *took counsel against him, saying, God hath forsaken him, persecute him, and take him, for there is none to deliver him*; Psal. 71. 11. When Christ was gone, the World would conclude, that God had forsaken the Disciples, and so they might execute their Malice and Hatred upon them, for there was none to deliver them: And so they in some measure found; for they soon met with Trouble and Tribulation from the World, as Christ had told them, and groan'd under a heavy Burden of Persecution. But for their Comfort he tells them, that tho *they shall be sorrowful* a while, *yet their Sorrow shall be turned into Joy*, for *in a little while* (saith he) *ye shall see me again*, and that shall be unto you a time of Joy and Rejoicing: the Light whereof shall break forth from under the Clouds of Sorrow and Persecution, and after shine with a bright and undisturb'd Lustre; your Mourning shall be shortly turn'd into Rejoicing, and the Mirth of the Wicked into Sadness.

This our Saviour illustrates, in the following words, by a *Woman in travail*; who during *her Travail hath Sorrow, because her Hour is come; but as soon as she is deliver'd of a Child, she remembreth no more the Anguish, for joy that a Man is born into the World*: that is, your Heaviness at my going away, like the Pangs of a Woman in labour, hath given you no small Trouble, and filled your Hearts with Sorrow; but as soon as ye shall see me appear again, all your Pangs of Sorrow will be over and forgotten, for joy that I am come again into the World. *Ye now have Sorrow* (saith he) at my leaving of you, which you take to be a time of Mourning; *but I will see you again, and your Heart shall rejoice*: for that will be truly a time of Joy, when I shall come again in Glory to subdue all your Enemies, and to carry you away in Triumph with my self.

Neither

Neither will this be only a ſhort tranſitory Joy, that ſoon vaniſhes away, but ſuch as will be durable, and laſting: for *your Joy* (ſaith he) *no Man taketh from you.* 'Tis not liable to change, as the Joy of the Wicked is, or to ſink into a deeper Melancholy; but 'tis permanent, ever freſh, and never ceaſing. Worldly Joy is often turn'd into Sorrow; it lies in the power of Men in ſome meaſure to take it away, and to deprive us of it. Every one, even the worſt of Men, may give trouble to the beſt; and that may ſomewhat abate their Joy here, and create them ſome Diſquiet: but Chriſt, at his ſecond Coming, will make them abundant amends, and double and treble their Joys, for the Sorrows they have ſuſtain'd for his ſake. The Joys of the World, how ſweet and pleaſant ſoever they may appear, have yet great Mixtures and Alloys of Bitterneſs; in the midſt of Laughter the Heart is ſorrowful, and the Mirth of the Wicked ſoon ends in ſighing and loathing. *Solomon* compares the Joy of the Wicked to the crackling of Thorns under a Pot, which makes a ſhort Blaze and Noiſe, but both are quickly gone; and the Apoſtle elſewhere reſembles it to a Vapor, which appears gay for a while, and then vaniſhes away. But our Saviour entertains his Followers with no ſuch fleeting and tranſitory Delights, but reſerves for them Joys unſpeakable and full of Glory; a Foretaſte whereof he gives them here in this Life, but keeps the full Draught of them for hereafter, when he ſhall ſay unto them, *Enter into your Maſter's Joy.*

This is briefly the Senſe and Scope of the Goſpel for this Day; from whence we may learn,

1. The Manner of our Saviour's dealing with his Diſciples, which was with the greateſt Tenderneſs and Affection. He knew that his going away, howſoever they heard it, would be a matter of Sorrow to them; and that his going away without telling them of it, might ſo far overwhelm them, as to prove too hard for their Faith, and lead them into Infidelity: and therefore, to prevent theſe Evils, he by ſoft and eaſy Expreſſions drops it to them, telling them, that *a little while, and ye ſhall not ſee me*; to ſignify, that his Abſence would not be long: and again, *A little while, and ye ſhall ſee*; to let them know, that he would ſhortly come to them again, to their greater comfort. Whereby, like a tender Mother, he ſought to wean them from him a while, that he might give them greater Tokens of his Affection

fection after. And he bears still the same Affection and Tenderness for all his Followers, assisting them with his Grace, and allowing for all their Infirmities; and nothing but an obstinate Contempt of his Person and Precepts can turn his Bowels from us; which should enkindle the Flames of Love in our Breasts, and set us a longing for the Joy and Happiness of his Presence.

2. From the Shortness of our Saviour's stay, and the Certainty and Suddenness of his coming again, we may learn patiently to bear the hard Usage or Inconveniences we may meet with in the mean time. This World is a Place of Misery and Trouble, a Valley of Tears and Sorrow; we enter upon it crying, and go on our way in it weeping, till Death comes to dry up our Tears, and to drive away Sighing and Sobbing from us. Our Saviour told his Disciples, that in the World they should have Tribulation; and *ye now have Sorrow, but be of good comfort* (saith he) *I have overcome the World*; and your Sorrow shall be shortly turn'd into Joy. The Apostle stiles all our Afflictions here *light Afflictions*, because they *are but for a moment*; and considering the *exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory they work out for us*, he reckons them not worthy to be compar'd with it, and much less to be complain'd of. Our Life is but short, and therefore the Troubles of it cannot be long; Christ will come again in a little time, and rid us out of all. Let us then patiently bear with his Absence a while, and the Evils we may suffer by it; for *he that shall come will come, and will not tarry*. We are content (you know) to part with a Friend a while, in hopes of his speedy Return; and the Inconveniences of his Absence are abundantly recompens'd by the Joys of his Presence. Our Saviour bid his Disciples not to be dismay'd at his withdrawing a while from them, promising to supply the present Defects of his Absence with the Comforts of his Holy Spirit, and to make them better amends by the much greater Joys of his future Presence. The same Arguments of Consolation are still administer'd to us, to encourage us to bear up under all the Difficulties of this Life, in which even the best Men are permitted to have their share.

3. From the vast Difference that there is between the Joys and Sorrows of the Wicked and the Righteous, we may learn to have low Thoughts of the one, and to set a high Price and Value upon the other. The Joys of the Wicked

Wicked are trifling and tranſitory, mingled with ſecret Trouble and Regret, and their ſweeteſt Delights turn to Gall and Bitterneſs in the end; for which reaſon, *Solomon* makes all their *Mirth* to be no better than *Madneſs*, for ſo it will certainly prove at laſt. And as for the Troubles that befal the Wicked here, they are but the beginnings of Sorrow, and lead to endleſs weeping and wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth hereafter: ſo that the Wicked can take no comfort either in their Joys or Sorrows, but reap nothing but Diſappointment and a Curſe in both.

Whereas, on the other hand, the Joys of the Righteous are pure and unmix'd, ſolid and laſting; they give preſent eaſe, and flow at laſt into *Rivers of Pleaſure at God's right Hand for evermore*. *Your Heart ſhall rejoice*, ſaith our Saviour: 'tis an inward ſubſtantial Joy, that leaves no Sting or Remorſe behind it. *And your Joy no Man taketh from you*; 'tis out of the reach of any earthly Perſon to diminiſh it, and no human Power or Policy can deprive you of it; call'd therefore an everlaſting and never-fading Joy. For *I will ſee you again* (ſaith he to his Diſciples) *and take you to my ſelf*. And if the ſight of him for a few days after his Reſurrection did ſo revive the Hearts of his Diſciples, what Tranſports of Joy muſt poſſeſs them and us to ſee and enjoy him for ever? And ſure we may well enough bear with his Abſence a while, when his Return will be to ſo good purpoſe, to reward our ſhort Sufferings with endleſs Bliſs, and to exchange the Croſs for a Crown of Glory. Wherefore,

Laſtly, Let us prepare and long for his coming again; that as the Spouſe earneſtly looks for her abſent Husband, ſo we may wait and long for the Bridegroom of our Souls, to be receiv'd into his Embraces, and to be made for ever happy in his Preſence. In a word, let us pray him to haſten his Kingdom, and not to delay his Coming, that we may be made *like him*, and for ever *ſee him as he is*. *Even ſo come Lord Jeſus, come quickly*. Amen.

DIS-

DISCOURSE LXXIV.

The EPISTLE for the fourth Sunday after *Eaſter.*

St. James i. 17——22.

Every good Gift, and every perfect Gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no Variableneſs, neither ſhadow of turning. Of his own Will begat he us with the Word of Truth, that we ſhould be a kind of Firſt-Fruits of his Creatures; &c.

THE Collect for this Day minds us, that 'tis God alone that can order the unruly Wills and Affections of ſinful Men; and therefore prays him to turn our Love to the things which he commandeth, and our Deſire to the things that he doth promiſe; that ſo, among the various and manifold Changes of the World, our Hearts may be ſurely fix'd there, where true Joys are to be found. Accordingly the Epiſtle for the Day acquaints us with the Author of all the good things we receive or expect, *ver.* 17. inſtancing in one eſpecial and particular Gift of the Holy Spirit, *ver.* 18. and inferring thence ſome good and uſeful Leſſons, *ver.* 19, 20, &c.

The Epiſtle begins with the Author of all the good things we enjoy or expect, in theſe words: *Every good Gift, and every perfect Gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights*, &c. Where we have,

Firſt, The ſundry ſorts or kinds of good things, compris'd under *every good Gift, and every perfect Gift.*

Secondly, The Spring and Fountain whence they flow, and from whom they come; they *are from above, and come down from the Father of Lights.*

Thirdly, The unchangeable Nature of the Donor, *with whom is no Variableneſs, nor ſhadow of Turning.* I begin,

First, With the ſundry ſorts or kinds of good things here mention'd, and compris'd in a Verſe either deſignedly made, or caſually hit upon, Πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ, καὶ πᾶν δώρημα τέλειον, *Every good Gift and every perfect Gift*: which may be thus diſtinguiſh'd: By *every good Gift*, we may underſtand all temporal Gifts, or the good things of this Life, which chiefly relate to the Body; ſuch as Life, Health, Wealth, Honour, Power, and the like, with all things conducing thereunto: all which are the Bleſſings of God, and ſo may juſtly be reckon'd in the number of good Gifts. By *every perfect Gift*, we are to underſtand all ſpiritual Gifts, or the good things of the other Life, which relate chiefly to the Welfare of our Souls; ſuch as Chriſt's giving himſelf to us, his giving the Holy Ghoſt, with all the Gifts and Graces of it, his giving the Goſpel, the Holy Sacraments, with all other means of Grace and hopes of Glory: all which being the higheſt Bleſſings that God can give, are juſtly ſtil'd by the name of *Perfect Gifts*. Indeed theſe are both good and perfect Gifts, yea, of all good things the beſt, and of all perfect things the moſt perfect; being (as one hath deſcrib'd them) the Gifts of Perfection, and the Perfection of all other Gifts.

Secondly, But whence come theſe Gifts, or from whom do they flow? The Anſwer to that will lead us to the Spring and Fountain of them, which St. *James* here tells us *is from above*, and that they *come down from the Father of Lights*: which words declare God to be the Author of them, and that every good and every perfect Gift, that is, all Bleſſings temporal, ſpiritual, and eternal, deſcend wholly from him, as will eaſily appear by a ſhort View of them. For temporal Bleſſings; Life, which is the firſt and greateſt of them, is entirely owing to him, for *he giveth us Life, and Breath, and all things; and 'tis in him that we live, move, and have our Being*: Acts 17. 25. Health, the next Bleſſing to that, is likewiſe wholly from God; whom *David* therefore often ſtiles, the *God of his Health*. Hence we find God declaring by the Prophet, *I will reſtore Health unto thee, and will heal all thy Wounds*; Jer. 30. 17. And, *Chap.* 33. 6. *Behold, I will bring Health, and reveal unto them abundance of Peace*. Wealth, another great Bleſſing of this Life, is by *Solomon* ſaid *to be given by God*, Eccl. 6. 2. And elſewhere, *The Bleſſing of God maketh rich.*

rich. For Power, St. *Paul* tells us, that *all Power is of God*, Rom. 13. And our Saviour told *Pilate*, that *he could have no Power over him, unleſs it were given him from above.*

So likewiſe Honour, and all other worldly Advantages, are often ſtil'd the Gifts of God; yea, the Sun never ſhines upon our Heads, but it directs our Contemplation to the great Father of Lights, who guides its Courſe, and gives it all its Influence. There is not a Shower falls upon the Ground, but bids us to look up to God as the Fountain, who opens the Windows of Heaven, and ſendeth forth Rain to water the Earth.

Thus we ſee every good Gift or temporal Bleſſing is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, that is, from him that made the Sun, Moon, and Stars, thoſe great Lights of Heaven; not from the Lights themſelves, as the Heathens vainly imagin'd, and therefore worſhipp'd the whole Hoſt of Heaven, but from the Father of thoſe Lights, who firſt kindled and ſet them up.

And as every good, ſo every perfect or ſpiritual Gift is from above, and cometh down from the ſame Father of Lights: the great invaluable Gift of the Holy Ghoſt, deſcended thence, and lighted upon the Heads of the Apoſtles and others, inſpiring them with its Gifts and Graces, for the enlightning and edifying the Church of Chriſt. From thence it is, that we receive the Light of the Goſpel to direct us, the Light of the Holy Spirit to comfort us, the Light of Grace to ſanctify us, and the Light of Glory to reward and crown us. Now God is the Father of all theſe Lights, which he imparts to his Children, *giving them Grace and Glory, and with-holding no good thing from them that lead a Godly Life:* All which Gifts, both good and perfect, are from above, and come down from this Father of Lights;

Thirdly, With whom (as St. *James* affirms in the next words) *is no Variableneſs, neither ſhadow of Turning:* where the Apoſtle alludes and refers to the Sun, which next under God is the Father of Lights, for it gives Light to the whole World, and ſhines to all the Parts of it. But yet St. *James* here advances God, the great Father of Lights, far above it; for the Sun hath its Variations and Turnings, it hath every day its Riſing and Setting, in the Morning moving and mounting up to the Meridian, which maketh High-Noon; and from thence declining and going down in the Evening, till it leave us in the dark, and that

maketh Night. This is by Aſtronomers, and by the Apoſtle in the Text, call'd παραλλαγὴ, the Parallax, or different Habitude and Appearance of the Sun in its daily Motion from *Eaſt* to *Weſt*. And as it hath its Variation, ſo hath it its Turning too; for it ſometimes goes farther from us, and then 'tis Winter; ſometimes it comes nearer to us, and then 'tis Summer: and this it doth every Year, ſucceſſively moving from one Hemiſphere to the other. And this is call'd τροπὴ, or the Sun's turning or moving towards the Tropicks, in his yearly Courſe from *North* to *South*, which caſts different ſhadows upon the ſeveral Inhabitants of the Earth: Thus it is with the Sun.

But with God the great Father of Lights (ſaith our Apoſtle) *there is no ſuch Variableneſs, nor ſhadow of Turning.* He hath no Riſing or Setting, but is conſtant in ſending out his Rays upon us; *he is the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and for ever, and changeth not.* He gives forth his Light without any mixture of ſhade, and is ſtill pouring out his Gifts and Benefits upon us; and that too without any Merit or Deſert of ours, but merely of his own good Will and Pleaſure: for ſo the next words tell us, *Of his own Will begat he us with the Word of Truth, that we ſhould be a kind of Firſt-Fruits of his Creatures:* where his begetting us with the Word of Truth, is his regenerating us by the Goſpel, by which we are made Chriſtians, and Heirs of everlaſting Salvation. Thus St. *Paul* declar'd himſelf, to be the Inſtrument of begetting *the* Corinthians *thro the Goſpel*, 1 Cor. 4. 15. And St. *Peter* minds Chriſtians of their being *born again to a new Life, by the incorruptible Seed of God's Word, which abideth for ever*; 1 Pet. 1. 23. Now this being born again, was the tranſlating them from a State of Heatheniſm, to the embracing of Chriſtianity, which is elſewhere deſcrib'd by a *turning them from Darkneſs to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God*; which is here ſaid to be done *with the Word of Truth:* which diſcover'd to them the Error of their former ways, and inclin'd them to receive the Truth as it is in Jeſus. As in the firſt Creation God ſaid, *Let there be Light, and there was Light*; by which he turn'd the rude unform'd Chaos into an orderly Structure: ſo, in the new Creation, God's Word brings a convincing Light upon the Soul, which diſpels the former Darkneſs of Error, and introduces the Light and Love of Divine Truths; and this is his begetting of us with the Word of Truth: which Favour being firſt granted to the Apoſtles,

and

and Primitive Chriſtians, who were firſt call'd to this Dignity, as we read, *Eph.* 1. 12. St. *James*, who was one of them, here ſtiles them *A kind of Firſt-Fruits of his new Creatures*, referring to thoſe that follow'd and grew up after them: all which he aſcribes, not to any Worth or Merit in our ſelves, but entirely to God's own free Will and Pleaſure. From whence he infers ſome weighty and neceſſary Duties, ſaying, in the next Verſe, *Wherefore, my beloved Brethren, let every Man be ſwift to hear, ſlow to ſpeak, ſlow to Wrath.*

1. Since the Word of God hath ſo great an Efficacy, and ſo good an Influence upon the Mind, let every one be ready to hear and receive it. The Ear is the Inſtrument of Inſtruction, and Knowledg as well as Faith comes by Hearing. He that will not lend an ear to Wiſdom, will never be wiſe; and he that will not hear, can never learn. *Moſes* frequently call'd upon the *Iſraelites*, ſaying, *Hear, O* Iſrael, *and hearken unto the Voice of the Lord:* And God himſelf upbraids their Backwardneſs, ſaying, *Iſrael would not hear, and my People will not underſtand.* And therefore to quicken them, the Prophets generally begin their Prophecies with, *Hear ye the Word of the Lord*; to open their Ears, and beſpeak their Attention. *Solomon* often calls upon us by the name of Sons and Children, to hear and receive Inſtruction: *My Son* (ſaith he) *incline thine Ear to Wiſdom, and apply thy Heart to Underſtanding; ſo ſhall it be as Life unto thy Soul, and a Grace unto thy Neck.* We are wont to liſten with Reverence and Attention to the Words and Speeches of wiſe Men; but how much more ſhould we do ſo to the Word of God, in whom are hid all the Treaſures of Wiſdom and Knowledg? Our Saviour pronounces thoſe bleſſed, that hear his Word, and delight in his Inſtructions. The Angels of the ſeven Churches call upon all Perſons, in theſe words, *He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear.* God hath given us Ears, not to be as Spunges, to ſuck in all obſcene and filthy Diſcourſe, or to liſten unto Vanity; but to be as Fans to ſeparate the Chaff from the Wheat, and to diſtinguiſh between Good and Evil, receiving the one, and rejecting the other. *The Words of the Lord* (ſaith the Pſalmiſt) *are pure Words*; we cannot err in hearing or following them, but we may be miſled, without care, in hearkening too much to others: and if God find a Tongue to ſpeak, ſure we ought to find Ears to hear, yea, to be ever ready and *ſwift to hear.*

2. St. *James* adviſes us, as to be ſwift to hear, *ſo to be ſlow to ſpeak*; which ſome, with reference to what went before, underſtand of not being too forward to ſpeak as Teachers and Inſtructors of others, without a Call and Commiſſion ſo to do: and ſo look upon it as a check to the Preſumption of haſty Novices and falſe Teachers, who take upon them to be publick Teachers, before and without a ſufficient Call thereunto. Of whom the Apoſtle asks the Queſtion, *How ſhall they preach, except they be ſent?* Rom. 10. Others again interpret this being ſlow to ſpeak, of not being raſh or haſty to utter any thing before God; and thereby condemn all *extempore* Effuſions in Prayer: according to that of *Solomon*, *Be not raſh with thy Mouth, or haſty to utter any thing before God; for God is in Heaven, and thou upon Earth, therefore let thy Words be few*: Eccl. 5. 2. And in the foregoing Verſe, *to be more ready to hear, than to offer the Sacrifice of Fools, who conſider not that they do Evil.* But moſt underſtand this Slowneſs of ſpeaking, of a Warineſs and Deliberation in our words, that we be not too talkative, or given to vain babbling; but to conſider well what we ſpeak before we utter it, like *David*, who ſaid, *I will take heed to my Ways, that I offend not with my Tongue; I will keep my Mouth as it were with a Bridle, whilſt the Ungodly is in my ſight*: Pſal. 39. 1, 2. To this end Naturaliſts have obſerv'd, that God hath given us two Ears, but one Tongue; to ſignify, that we are to hear twice as much as we are to ſpeak: And likewiſe, that God hath left the Ears open without a Guard, that we might be ever ready to hear; but hath ſet a double Incloſure upon the Tongue, *viz.* the Teeth and the Lips, to keep it within the Rules of Decency, and to reſtrain its Extravagance. And that we may be thus ſwift to hear, and ſlow to ſpeak, the Apoſtle directs,

3. To be *ſlow to Wrath*; for Anger ſtops the Ears, and lets looſe the Tongue, by which means it becomes (as St. *James* terms it) *a Fire, a World of Iniquity, that defiles the whole Body, and ſetteth on fire the Courſe of Nature, and is ſet on fire of Hell*: James 3. 6. To *give place unto Wrath*, is, in St. *Paul*'s Phraſe, *to give place to the Devil*; Eph. 4. 26, 27. and therefore wills us, not to let the Sun go down upon our Wrath, leſt it hinder or diſturb us in our Evening-Devotion. To be ſlow to Wrath, is to imitate our Maker, who is forward to forgive, but backward to take Vengeance; whereas to give way to our unruly Paſſions,

ſions, is to put our ſelves under the power of Satan, who will render us deaf to Inſtruction, and run us into all manner of Extravagance both in Words and Actions; for which reaſon we ſhould be hardly brought to Anger or Impatience, whatever the Wickedneſs of Men is, or how great ſoever their Provocations may be.

And that becauſe, as our Apoſtle adds in the next Verſe, *The Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteouſneſs of God*; that is, Wrath and Impatience are no way agreeable either with the Temper or the Rules of the Chriſtian Religion, nor do they work any good Effect either upon our ſelves or others. *Ira furor brevis eſt*, Anger is a ſhort Frenzy, and makes Men play all the Pranks of Madmen; it obſtructs us in our Duty to God and Man, and hinders the doing any thing that is good or acceptable to either: and therefore *Solomon* tells us, *That Anger reſteth in the Boſom of Fools, but he that is ſlow to Wrath is of great Wiſdom.*

And becauſe the Word of God is the beſt Allayer of theſe Heats and Diſtempers of the Mind, the Apoſtle, in the cloſe of this Epiſtle, exhorts Chriſtians to receive this Word with Meekneſs, and to lay aſide all Pride and Prejudice, and whatever elſe may hinder the due Operation of it on their Hearts, in the laſt words; *Wherefore lay apart all Filthineſs and Superfluity of Naughtineſs, and receive with Meekneſs the engrafted Word, which is able to ſave your Souls*: where we are adviſ'd to lay apart all filthy Lufts and Paſſions, all Superfluity of Exceſs and Naughtineſs, which, like Excreſcences in the Natural Body, draw away the Blood and Spirits from the better Parts, and cauſe them to pine away and decay. There are evil Humours in the Soul as well as the Body, which if not purg'd away, will occaſion great Danger and Damage to both; and therefore the Apoſtle here ſpeaks of engrafting the good Word of God upon the Stock of our corrupt Nature, that it may yield good Fruit, and produce good Effects within us. By thus removing the Impediments of Vice and Impurity, we ſhall be the better fitted to receive the pure Word of God with Meekneſs, and bring forth the Fruits of it with Patience; and then we ſhall find the Truth of what is here affirm'd in the cloſe, that 'twill *be able to ſave our Souls.* St. *Paul* affirms the ſame, that the Holy Scriptures are able to *make us wiſe unto Salvation*; 1 Tim. 3. 15. meaning, that they ſhew us the way to eternal Life; and if we follow

the Directions contain'd in them, we ſhall not miſs of the *end of our Faith, the Salvation of our Souls.*

This is a brief Summary of this Day's Epiſtle, which may ſerve to direct our Practice in the following Particulars.

1ſt, Since God is the Author and Beſtower of every good and perfect Gift, we may learn to whom to give the Thanks and the Glory of them; as alſo, to whom we are to addreſs for the obtaining of them. The Glory of them is to be aſcrib'd, not to any Art or Induſtry of ours, and much leſs to any Merits or Worthineſs of our own, for we are leſs than the leaſt of all his Mercies; but intirely to the Bounty and Goodneſs of God, who gives them where, how, and to whom he pleaſes. We rob God of his Honour, if we aſcribe any thing in the leaſt meaſure to our ſelves: for all that we arrogate or aſſume to our ſelves, is taken from him to whom all his due; and therefore we are in all caſes to ſay with the Pſalmiſt, *Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy Name be all the Praiſe.*

And as we are taught where to give the Glory of them, ſo are we hereby directed where to ſeek or go for them; we ſee they are from above, and come down from the Father of Lights, and therefore we muſt look up to him from whom they deſcend, if we mean to have them: *If any of you lack Wiſdom*, (ſaith our Apoſtle) *let him ask it of God*; he is the Spring and Fountain from whence it flows, and thither muſt we have recourſe for it. And we have encouragement enough ſo to do, for *he giveth to all Men, and upbraideth not*: beſide, this Father of Lights hath no variableneſs and changeth not, he is conſtant and faithful that hath promis'd, and never faileth them that ſeek to him.

2dly, Since we are begotten again by the Word of Truth, as by a new Creation, let us, as we are here exhorted, be ſwift to hear, and ready to receive this ingrafted Word, that is able to ſave our Souls. 'Twas a Father's Obſervation, that God from Heaven began the Law with hearing; ſaying, *Hear O* Iſrael: and that God from Heaven ſo began the Goſpel, ſaying, *This is my beloved Son, hear him.* And as we are to begin, ſo are we to continue ſtill hearing; ſo the Apoſtle interprets that of the Pſalmiſt, *While it is called to-day, hearken to his Voice*, extending it to every Day; for to-morrow, and every Day when it comes, is called to-day, and ſo reaches to all the Days of our Life. And there is good reaſon for it, from the continual Neceſſity

we ſtand in, of Hearing the Word of God; which being the Food of the Soul, we have as conſtant need of it as we have of our daily Bread to feed our Bodies: yea, our Saviour calls it the One thing neceſſary; for when *Martha* was cumber'd about many things, in providing for the Body, *Mary* was ſaid to have choſen the better part, in ſitting and hearing his Words; which was the one thing neceſſary for the Salvation of the Soul, *Luke* 10. 41, 42. Hearing is neceſſary for the begetting of Faith; *For Faith comes by Hearing, and Hearing by the Word of God*, Rom. 10. 'Tis neceſſary to the Duty of Prayer; for *how can they call upon him*, (ſaith the Apoſtle) *of whom they have not heard?* In ſhort, hearing is neceſſary to all the Ends of Religion, it directs us in the Paths of Righteouſneſs, and brings us at laſt to everlaſting Life.

Laſtly, From what hath been ſaid, we may learn to govern our Words and Paſſions, that we be not haſty in Speech or Spirit, but ſlow and deliberate in both. *In the Multitude of words* (ſaith *Solomon*) *there wanteth not Folly*, and a Fool is known by much ſpeaking. Wiſdom is ſeen in few and well-weigh'd words, and a wiſe Man is wary and ſparing in Speech, eſpecially in looſe and bad Company, which the Apoſtle expreſſes here by *ſlow to ſpeak:* and that will help us to govern our Paſſions; for raſh and haſty words oft-times inflame and ſtir up Anger, but ſoft and deliberate words help to quench and allay thoſe heats. So that to be *ſlow to ſpeak*, is a good Way and Means to be *ſlow to Wrath*. In a word, to conclude, let us all, my Brethren, *be ſwift to hear*, and ready to receive the Word of God; not like thoſe who will ſcarce move over their Threſhold to hear a Sermon. Let us be *ſlow to ſpeak*, weighing all our Speeches, that they may adminiſter Grace to the Hearers, and not forward to babble or utter every thing that comes firſt to head. Let us *be ſlow to Wrath*, not apt to kindle at every Spark, but imitating our Maker, who is ſlow to Wrath, and ready to ſhew Mercy. *Amen.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE LXXV.

The GOSPEL for the Fourth Sunday after *Easter*.

St. John xvi. 5——16.

Jesus said unto his Disciples, Now I go my way to him that sent me, and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, Sorrow hath filled your Heart. Nevertheless I tell you the Truth, it is expedient for you, that I go away, &c.

OUR Blessed Saviour thought fit to stay awhile upon Earth, after his Resurrection from the Dead, to confirm the Faith of his Disciples, to settle the Christian Church, and to provide for a Succession of Officers in it to the World's end. And when he had taken care about these things, he began to acquaint his Disciples with his Design of leaving them, and going to his Father. And because he knew that his departing from them would be a Matter of great Grief and Trouble to them, he seeks, in the Gospel for this Day, to prepare them for it, and to comfort them under it. To prevent surprize, he lets them know what Troubles and Difficulties they were like to meet with from the World; ver. 2, 3. *They shall put you out of the Synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you shall think that he doth God Service.* And *now* (saith he) *I go my way to him that sent me.* Having finish'd the Work that was given me to do upon Earth, I am now to return again to my Father in Heaven. And yet (saith he) *none of you asketh me, whither goest thou?* Which words imply not any such Unconcernedness in the Disciples, as if they cared not when, or where he was going; but that they were so overwhelm'd with Sorrow and Sadness, that they were not able to utter their Minds, or to ask any Questions about it: for so the next words of our Saviour intimate; *Because I have said these things unto you, Sorrow*

hath

hath filled your Hearts. Your hearing of my going away, and your fearing what may befal you when I am gone, hath ſo diſmay'd and ſunk your Spirits, that you cannot well bear the thoughts of my Departure. And therefore to comfort them, he adds,

In the next Verſe, *Nevertheleſs, I tell you the Truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will ſend him unto you. Nevertheleſs*, that is, notwithſtanding all that I have told you of the Malice of the World, and the many and great Troubles you may fear from thence in my Abſence; yet for all that, it will be for your good for me to *go away*: and herein *I tell you the Truth*; uſing no Guile, Fraud or Flattery in this caſe, but declaring to you the very truth of this Matter, *viz.* that *'tis expedient for you that I go away.* Which is as if he had ſaid, your unwillingneſs to part with me is indeed a Token of your Love to me, but not to your ſelves; it proceeds merely from a miſtake of your own Benefit and Advantage, for you will be Loſers by my Stay, and Gainers by my Departure: *For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you*; my continuance with you will deprive you of the comfortable Preſence of the Holy Ghoſt, whoſe Joys will be your beſt Support under all the Troubles that may befal you.

But if I depart, I will ſend him unto you: My going away will occaſion the coming of this Comforter, whoſe joyful Preſence will make abundant amends for my Abſence; and therefore be not griev'd too much at my leaving of you, which will tend to your greater Comfort: I love you too well to ſtay to your prejudice, and my withdrawing awhile will be more for your Service, than my conſtant abiding with you.

But wherein lay the Expedience of Chriſt's going away? Why, chiefly in theſe three things:

1ſt, His going away and aſcending up into Heaven, was to be our Harbinger, to prepare a Place for us in thoſe Celeſtial Manſions. So he expreſly told his Diſciples, *In my Father's Houſe are many Manſions; I go to prepare a Place for you, and will come again to receive you to my ſelf, that where I am, there may ye be alſo.* He purchas'd a Place for us whilſt he was upon Earth, by the Merit of his Sufferings, and after went to Heaven to take poſſeſſion of it, and to prepare for our Reception into it: by both theſe he hath ſet the Gates of Heaven wide open for us, where an

Entrance

Entrance is adminiſter'd to us abundantly into the Kingdom of God. This is a Matter of ſo great Importance to us, that 'twas highly expedient for us that he ſhould go away to bring it to paſs; and we may well enough bear with his Abſence awhile, when he is gone before to ſo good purpoſe.

2*dly*, 'Twas expedient for us that he ſhould go away, that he might be an Advocate and Interceſſor for us at God's Right Hand. So the Author to the *Hebrews* tells us, that *Chriſt, after he had by himſelf purg'd away our Sins, enter'd into the Holy Place, there to appear in the Preſence of God for us*; Heb. 9. 24. Hence St. *John* declares, *If any Man ſin, we have an Advocate with the Father, even Jeſus Chriſt the Righteous, and he is the Propitiation for our Sins*; 1 John 2. 1. This is a Matter of ſuch vaſt Benefit and Concernment to us, to have ſuch an Advocate ever ready to plead our Cauſe and to appear in Heaven for us, that we may well bear with his Departure awhile, upon ſo happy and beneficial an Errand. 'Tis, you know, a very great Privilege, to have a faithful Friend and Favourite in the Court of Princes, to preſent our Petitions, and procure Audience to them; but how much greater Honour and Favour is it, to have the only-begotten Son of God, yea, one that is himſelf God bleſſed for ever, to be our conſtant Friend and Interceſſor in the Court of Heaven? Sure, his going thither to this end, muſt be highly honourable and expedient for us.

3*dly*, This Expedience will farther appear, becauſe his going away was in order to the Coming of the Comforter: *If I go not away* (ſaith he) *the Comforter will not come*; *but if I depart, I will ſend him unto you*. What great need we all ſtand in of a Comforter under the Troubles of this Life, every one's Experience can eaſily ſatisfy him. Chriſt told his Diſciples, that the *World would hate them, becauſe he had choſen them out of the World*: and therefore would not have them *marvel at it*; *for they hated him, before they hated them*. This Hatred and Malice of theirs will occaſion much hard Uſage, and expoſe to many Injuries; and as there was then, ſo there ſtill is great need of ſome ſtrong Cordials to ſupport the Spirits under ſuch trials, which Cordials are adminiſter'd only by this Comforter; and it muſt be mightily for our Intereſt that this Comforter ſhould come: ſo that if he will not come without Chriſt's departing, and will ſurely come upon it, it muſt be expedient for us that he go away.

But

But what Neceſſity was there (may ſome ſay) of his going away to this end? If he would ſtay, we had Conſolation enough in his Preſence, and could neither deſire nor need a better Comforter. Why, there was a Neceſſity for this, and a great one too; for 'twas the peculiar Office of the Holy Ghoſt in the Oeconomy of Man's Salvation, to ſanctify and comfort the elect People of God; 'twas the Counſel and Contrivance of the whole Trinity, that each Perſon ſhould have his Part or Office in the Work of Man's Redemption: God the Father was to give his Son; God the Son was to give himſelf; and God the Holy Ghoſt was to apply the Virtue of both for the Conſolation and Salvation of Mankind. So that this was the proper Part and Office of the Holy Ghoſt, which Chriſt would not hinder or invade; he was for our Comfort to confirm and convey to us the Benefits of Chriſt's Satisfaction: for tho the Purchaſe of Salvation was made for us by Chriſt's Death, yet the Seal could not be put to it but by the Holy Spirit, who is therefore ſaid to *ſeal us up to the Day of Redemption*; Epheſ. 4. 30. And as no Writing or Deed of Purchaſe is of any force, unleſs it be ſeal'd, ſo neither would all that Chriſt had ſaid or did, avail us any thing if the Holy Ghoſt had not come to aſcertain and apply it to us. So that as Chriſt is ſtil'd *the Word*, to direct and aſſiſt us; ſo the Holy Spirit is ſaid to be *the Seal*, to confirm and ſecure all to us.

Moreover, as without this Seal of the Spirit nothing could be effectually done for us, ſo without the Aid of his Grace, nothing can be acceptably done by us, no Means of Salvation will be of any Uſe or Benefit to us without his Bleſſing and Aſſiſtance: 'tis the Spirit's moving upon the Waters of Baptiſm, that makes them ſalutary and efficacious to us, and there is no *Laver of Regeneration, without the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt*. So in that other Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, *the Fleſh profiteth nothing, 'tis the Spirit that giveth Life*. 'Tis this that helps all our Infirmities in Prayer, and works all our Works in us and for us; it ſanctifies and comforts us in all our Diſtreſſes, and without his inward Joys and Conſolation, we ſhould ſink under the Burden of them. Neceſſary then it was that this Comforter ſhould come.

But what Neceſſity was there (may another ſay) of his going away? Why muſt Chriſt go, before the Comforter will come? Could they not both ſtay together? and that would

would make the Conſolation the greater. Why! there was a Neceſſity for this too, for Chriſt had promis'd to ſend the Holy Ghoſt to ſupply his Abſence, which could not be except he had gone away; for the ſending another, ſuppoſes the Abſence of him that ſendeth, as well as the Preſence of the Party ſent. Beſide, the Holy Ghoſt proceeding from the Father and the Son, was to be ſent by both, and therefore 'twas expedient for him to go to his Father to that end.

Moreover, Chriſt's going away was neceſſary in reſpect of the Holy Ghoſt, whoſe Godhead would not have been ſo clearly manifeſted, if Chriſt had continu'd; for all the Miracles done by the Spirit of God, might have been aſcrib'd to the Son, if he had not withdrawn, and ſo the Holy Ghoſt might not have had that due Honour and Eſtimation that belong'd to him.

But there was yet a farther Expedience in Chriſt's going away, in reſpect of the Diſciples themſelves; and that was, to wean them from his bodily Preſence, of which they began to grow too fond; and to make them more ſenſible of the Benefit of his ſpiritual Preſence, which was much better for them: for his bodily Preſence was confin'd to place, and ſo few could have the Benefit or Comfort of it, but his ſpiritual Preſence was every where, and ſo had a more diffuſive and cheriſhing Influence. And therefore as a Mother ſometimes withdraws her ſelf from her Child, whom ſhe dearly loves, merely to take it off from a too great Fondneſs of her; ſo our Bleſſed Saviour often talk'd to his Diſciples of his going away, and after withdrew his Perſon from them, to wean them from their too great Love of his bodily Preſence, that they might receive the comfortable Inſtructions and Joys of the Holy Ghoſt, which would be of more advantage to them, than his corporal Preſence.

Thus we ſee the Expedience of Chriſt's going away, in order to his ſending the Comforter to us. But what was this Comforter to do when he came? What he was to do with reſpect to us, we have in ſome meaſure ſeen; namely, to aſſiſt, ſanctify, and comfort us. What he was to do in reſpect of the World, the next Verſes of this Goſpel will inform us; where we read, *And when he is come he ſhall reprove the World of Sin, and of Righteouſneſs, and of Judgment.* Where our Saviour alludes to the three ſorts of Cauſes or Actions amongſt the *Jews*, that were uſually pleaded

in

in their Courts. And they were first criminal Causes, expres'd here by the Name of *Sin*: Secondly, Actions about Right or Wrong, expres'd here by *Righteousness*: and thirdly, Actions about the Reward or Punishments of both, expres'd here by *Judgment*. Accordingly Christ here told them, that the Holy Ghost at his coming would plead his cause against the World, and lay against it those three sorts of Actions; reproving it first *of Sin* (saith he) *because they believe not on me*. And there charging them with the Guilt of Infidelity. Secondly, *of Righteousness* (saith he) *because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more*: meaning, that he would vindicate his Innocence by his Ascension into Heaven, where he should be above the reach of their Malice, and they depriv'd of any farther sight of him. Thirdly, *Of Judgment, because the Prince of this World is judged*: that is, he shall urge and execute Vengeance upon Satan and all his Instruments for their Cruelty in crucifying of him, and shall pronounce Sentence of eternal Death and Destruction upon them. To which our Saviour adds, in the next Verse, *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now*: meaning, that he had more Matters to reveal to them from his Father, relating to the Christian Law; but you are many of you so wedded to the *Jewish* Ordinances and Traditions, in which you have been educated, that you cannot receive them yet, nor be patient under them. *Howbeit* (saith he) *when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all Truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he shall shew you things to come.* Where we have,

1*st*, The Coming of the Holy Ghost suppos'd or taken for granted; *When he, the Spirit of Truth, is come.* This is grounded upon Christ's Promise after his Departure to send him; *If I go away* (saith he) *I will send him unto you*: and he is call'd here, *the Spirit of Truth*, in opposition to those lying Spirits, that are gone abroad into the World. And likewise because he is said,

2*dly*, To guide them into all Truth. His Office is to enlighten our Mind, and to impart to us the whole Will of God; and therefore our Saviour told his Disciples, that tho there were some things concerning Christianity, which by reason of the Weakness of their Faith, and the Grossness of their Understanding, they could not bear at present, being not yet fully wean'd from the Ceremonies of

Moses's

Moſes's Law, yet this Spirit of Truth at his coming will ſhew you the Full of his Father's Mind in thoſe Matters, and deliver you from the Miſtakes and Prejudices you yet labour under concerning thoſe legal Obſervances.

And what he ſhall ſay, ſhall be no private Doctrine of his own; *for he ſhall not ſpeak of himſelf*, but *whatſoever he ſhall hear* of the Father or me, *that ſhall he ſpeak.* He ſhall inculcate upon you, what I have already taught you, and likewiſe bring to your remembrance what you have forgotten of what I have ſaid unto you. Neither will he ſhew you only things paſt or preſent, but alſo future things; *He will ſhew you things to come:* which may relate either to ſome great Truths, not then fully known, as the calling in of the *Gentiles*, and the like; or elſe to ſome clearer Revelations of a future Life, than were at that time diſcover'd.

Moreover, Chriſt tells them, that one great End of the Coming of this Holy Spirit, was to publiſh and promote his Glory, *He ſhall glorify me:* that is to ſay, all that I have done and ſuffer'd for the Good of my Church, ſhall then have their glorious Effect, and obtain their End; for the Holy Ghoſt ſhall apply to them my Righteouſneſs, and the Merits of my Death, communicating to them a new and ſpiritual Life; and thereby ſhall at once ſet forth my Glory, and ſet forward the Salvation of Men. And this he ſhall do by the Help and Inſtructions of my Doctrine; *For he ſhall receive of mine, and ſhall ſhew it unto you:* that is, he ſhall have his Meſſage from me, and ſhall reveal nothing unto you, but what he hath receiv'd from me.

Not that I exclude my Father (ſaith he) by appropriating theſe things to my ſelf; for *all things that the Father hath, are mine*, i. e. All things are common between us: *I and my Father are one*, his Will and mine are the ſame: and as my Work is to do the Will of my Father, ſo I therein do my own, our Wills exactly accord together; *Therefore ſaid I, that he ſhall take of mine, and ſhall ſhew it unto you.* Whatſoever the Father ſhall reveal unto you, is the ſame, or agreeable to my Doctrine; and his revealing it is a taking of mine, and declaring unto you.

This is the full and entire Senſe of the whole Goſpel for this Day; from which we may learn many good Leſſons: As,

1. From

1. From Christ's acquainting his Disciples with, and preparing them for his Departure, we learn the tender Love and Affection he bears towards his People. He knew they would be troubled at his going from them, and accordingly found it so upon the first motion or mentioning of it; and therefore prepar'd for them the strongest Cordials and Consolations to support their Spirits. He shew'd his Good-will towards them, by promising another and a better Comforter to supply his Place, and declar'd his Unwillingness to leave them, if their own Happiness and Salvation did not require it. Whereby he seem'd to deal with them, as a tender Mother doth with her dear Child; she knows it necessary to wean it, and yet is loth to withdraw from it, and can hardly suffer it out of her sight. Christ must go, but his Bowels yearn'd upon those he left behind; which may abundantly satisfy us of his tender Love and dear Affection towards us.

2. From the Disciples being troubled at the News of Christ's going away, we learn that Men may and many times are grieved at that which is for their Good, and desire that which tends to their Prejudice. This was the Case of the Disciples here, they were all against Christ's going away, which was mightily for their Advantage; and they were all for his Stay, which would have prov'd a great Disadvantage to them: for the former brought, the latter would have hinder'd the Coming of the Comforter. And therefore a Reverend Father on this Place brings in Christ saying to his Disciples, "Your Hearts are filled with "Sorrow, because your Heads are filled with Error. You "take my Stay to be beneficial to you, but this is a Mis-"take in you, for 'twill prove a Hindrance to you, and "turn to your greater Loss." And 'tis too common for Men to err, as in this, so in many other Points: for Men are wont to court Prosperity as their great Happiness, and to dread Adversity as their great Misfortune, when the former is many times full of Danger, and the latter of much more Use and Benefit to them: which should teach us to be not only content, but thankful under all the Dispensations of Divine Providence.

3. If it be thus expedient for us (as we have seen) that Christ should go away, then let us learn, to bear patiently awhile the Absence of our Lord: He is gone before as our Harbinger, to prepare a place for us in his heavenly Kingdom; he is ascended up to be our Advocate, to inter-

cede with the Father in our behalf, and to plead our Cause for us; and he will shortly come again, and take us to himself. In the mean time he hath taken great Care of us, by sending to us his Holy Spirit, to direct and comfort us in all Conditions, to guide us by his Counsel here, and at last to bring us to Glory. Let us therefore thankfully own these his inestimable Favours, and rejoice in his spiritual, tho we are depriv'd awhile of his corporal Presence. He promis'd not to *leave us comfortless, but that he would come again to us*: the former he hath made good already, by giving us his Holy Spirit to comfort us, as we shall see hereafter. And therefore,

Lastly, Let us wait with Patience, and prepare our selves for the latter; for *he that shall come will come, and will not tarry*; Heb. 10. 37. The Bridegroom of our Souls is hastning to us; let us therefore with the wise Virgins get Oil in our Lamps, or Grace in our Hearts, that we may be prepar'd to meet him, and be welcom'd by him at his Coming. The foolish Virgins that had neglected this Preparation, were excluded from the Marriage; and none but they who had made themselves ready, were admitted to the Bridegroom's Presence. Let us then have on our Wedding-Garment, and adorn our Souls with the Graces of the Holy Spirit; and then we may join with the Souls under the Altar, in saying, *Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE LXXVI.

The EPISTLE for the Fifth Sunday after *Eaſter.*

St. James i. 22, to the end.

Be ye Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only, deceiving your own ſelves: For if any be a Hearer of the Word, and not a Doer, he is like unto a Man, beholding his natural Face in a Glaſs; for he beholdeth himſelf and goeth his way, and ſtraitway forgetteth what manner of Man he was, &c.

THE Collect for the Day prays to God, from whom all good things come, to grant, that by his holy Inſpiration we may think thoſe things that be good, and by his merciful guiding may perform the ſame.

The Epiſtle for the Day immediately follows that for the laſt Sunday, and begins where that ended. In the beginning of that, St. *James* told us, that *every good Gift and every perfect Gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights*: of which we are here minded again in the Prayer for this Day, that from him all good things do come. In the Cloſe of that Epiſtle we were exhorted to *be ſwift to hear, and to receive with Meekneſs the engrafted Word, that is able to ſave our Souls.* The next words, which begin this Day's Epiſtle, ſhew how the Word may become effectual to that end; and that is, by being *Doers of the Word, not Hearers only*: for tho hearing the Word may inſpire the Mind with good Thoughts, yet 'tis the doing or performing of it that can alone bring them to good effect; which is the thing we are taught to pray and endeavour for this Day. Hearers then we muſt be, as we ſaw before, but not Hearers only, but we muſt be Doers alſo; neither of them is to be excluded. We may not think, that the adding of doing hath excus'd us from the Duty of hearing; or that St. *James*, by opening the Hand for the one, hath ſhut the Ear from the other: neither can doing

go unaccompany'd with hearing; for we muſt firſt hear what we are to do, before we can do it. Neither alone is ſufficient, and therefore both muſt go together. And here a double Error may be eaſily detected in this matter:

The firſt is, Of thoſe who place all their Religion in Hearing:

The ſecond, Of thoſe who would make Doing an Excuſe from all Hearing.

For the firſt, there were ſome in the Apoſtles days, and there are ſtill too many in ours, who place all their Religion in Hearing; and think, if they come to Church, and hear a Sermon, all is well, tho they never mind or obſerve it after. We read of ſome, who *heap to themſelves Teachers, having itching Ears*; who will go many a mile to hear a Sermon, when they may hear a better at home in their own Pariſh. Theſe have heaps of Teachers, and heaps of Sermons, one juſtling out another, without making any good uſe of either. Nothing, they think, can be well done without a Sermon; no Prayers, no Thankſgivings, no Sacrament can avail any thing without it. They take the hearing of the Sermon to be the main, if not the whole of their Religion; and without it, ſcarce think Divine Service worth their Attendance. Theſe (as one hath obſerv'd) have only the Ear-mark of Chriſt's Sheep, without any thing of the Meekneſs, Innocence, or Humility that belongs to them. They hang up the Word as a Jewel in their Ear, merely for ſhow, without any farther uſe of it. Of theſe we may ask the Apoſtle's Queſtion, If the whole Body were an Ear, where were the Seeing? If all Religion conſiſt in hearing, what will become of *obeying, which is better than Sacrifice?* or receiving the Sacrament, which is the ſeeing and taſting of our Saviour? To be Hearers indeed of God's Word, is a good part of Religion, and a neceſſary means of Salvation; but yet 'tis but a Part, and not the Whole of either. We muſt not reſt in it, or rely upon it; for when the hearing is over, ſomething elſe is to be done: we are to be *Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only.* Again,

Secondly, There are others that ſet up a Pretence of Doing, to excuſe them from all Hearing. They tell us, that they ſerve God in their Hearts, and do to all Men as they would be done by; and this, they ſay, is the Sum of all Religion, which they make it their care to obſerve and practiſe; and ſo think it needleſs to go and hear Religion

run

ſun out into Enthuſiaſm, and ſpun into Niceties, Contentions, and trifling Obſervations: and upon this pretence caſt off all Hearing. The former was the Plea of Sectaries, and this of Atheiſts and looſe Perſons; and both miſcarry or ſplit upon two dangerous Rocks: For to ſet up Hearing againſt Doing, is Hypocriſy; and to pretend Doing without Hearing, is Profaneneſs and Partiality. Now to prevent both theſe Errors or Miſtakes, God hath join'd Hearing and Doing together; and thoſe whom God hath join'd together, let no Man put aſunder.

Yea, wherever we find Hearing commended, or hath any Bleſſing annex'd to it in Scripture, it never goes alone, but hath always Doing added to it. The *Iſraelites* were commended for ſaying unto *Moſes*, *Go near and bring thou God's Word unto us, and we will hear it, and do it*; Deut. 5. 28. Our Saviour compares him that heareth his Sayings and doth them, to a wiſe Builder, that builds his Houſe upon a Rock, where it can bear the ſhock of the greateſt Tempeſt: but to build upon Hearing only, is to build upon the Sand, where 'tis ſhaken and beaten down with every Wind; *Mat.* 7. 24. Again, *Luke* 11. 28. he pronounces thoſe *bleſſed that hear the Word of God, and keep it.* And elſewhere, *If ye know theſe things, happy are ye if ye do them.* Where Hearing and Doing are always put together, as St. *James* does here, *Be ye Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only.*

But what is it to be *Doers of the Word?* Why, not barely to commend a Sermon, ſaying with them in the Goſpel, *Maſter, thou haſt well ſaid*, Luke 20. 29. For tho this be better than cenſuring or carping at it, yet this at beſt is but ſaying, not doing. Nor yet,

2*dly*, Is it only to be mov'd and affected with a Diſcourſe; for Herod *heard* John Baptiſt *gladly*, and *Felix* trembled at St. *Paul's* Diſcourſe of *Juſtice, Temperance, and Judgment to come*; and yet neither of them were Doers of the Word: This is rather ſuffering under it, than doing of it. No, nor yet,

3*dly*, Is the repeating of Sermons, or conferring about them, the doing of them; for if it go no farther, this is ſtill but talking, not doing of them.

Doing then implies in it ſomewhat more than all this; and that is, to obey from the Heart the Form of Doctrine deliver'd to us, to put in practice what we hear, and to lead our Lives accordingly. 'Tis to be encourag'd by the Promiſes, to be aw'd by the Threats, and to be directed by

the Precepts of the Goſpel. 'Tis ſo to receive the ſpiritual Seed of God's Word into our Hearts, that it may bring forth Fruit in our Lives, and appear in the Acts of Holineſs and a good Converſation. To which end, the Word muſt be ingrafted into us, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, that it may fructify in us, and make us fruitful in every good Word and Work; and then it will be able to ſave our Souls. For Religion is not a ſpeculative, but practical Science; and our hearing of it, is not ſo much intended to fill our Heads with Knowledg, as our Hearts with Grace, and to conform our Lives to the Rules and Precepts of it. The preaching of the Word is deſign'd to direct us in our Duty to God, our Neighbour, and our ſelves; which we are to hearken to, not as matters of courſe, or idle Tales, that may go in at one Ear, and out at the other; but with a due Senſe of the Weight and Importance, and the Neceſſity of ordering our ſelves and Actions by them. In ſhort, to be Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only, is to reduce what we hear into practice, to be as willing to follow wholeſom Advice for the Good of our Souls, as we are for the Welfare of our Bodies; and to be as much or more concern'd about the Affairs of the next Life, as Men are wont to be about the leſſer Matters of this. Without which, we do but mock God and deceive our ſelves: for ſo the next words tells us, *Be Doers, not Hearers only, deceiving your own ſelves*; implying, that to reſt in Hearing only without Doing, is but to deceive our ſelves. Of all things in the world, Men hate to be deceiv'd; looking upon it as a Reproach to their Perſons, and a Reflection upon their Underſtanding. To be deceiv'd by a Friend, whom they truſted, and with whom they they took ſweet counſel together, adds a farther Sting and Edge to the Deceit; but for a Man to deceive himſelf, that is the worſt of all Deceits, for he is both the Deceiver and the Deceived too. He that is deceiv'd by another, finds pity, and the Deceiver blame; but he that deceives himſelf, is ſeldom or never pity'd, but bears the blame, and inherits the Fruits of his own Folly. And this is the Caſe of all that are Hearers of God's Word, and not Doers; they deceive themſelves, and wrong their own Souls.

But wherein lies this Deceit? Why, partly in the Way, and partly in the End of Hearing. That in the Way, is by aſcribing more to Hearing than is promis'd or belongs to it; that in the End, is by propounding falſe or wrong Ends in performing the Duty. Both theſe ways too many

err

err and deceive themselves in Hearing, and so deprive themselves of all the Benefit and Reward of the Duty.

For the 1*st*, God hath join'd Hearing and Doing together, and made many Promises of Life and Salvation to the joint Performance of them: as, *Hear, and your Souls shall live*; and, *He that heareth my Sayings and doth them, shall be blessed in his Deed.* Now to expect that from one alone, that is promis'd to both together, is to put a Fallacy upon a Man's self. The Schoolmen have observ'd a double Fallacy in it, the one *a sensu composito ad divisum*, by taking that singly, which is to be understood jointly; and so making a Part equal with the Whole: the other is, *a dicto secundum quid ad dictum simpliciter*, that is, by taking that absolutely, which is spoken conditionally, and in a qualify'd sense; and so ascribing that simply to Hearing, which is promis'd to it only as 'tis qualify'd and join'd with Doing; and both ways they put a Fallacy or Cheat upon themselves: As they do,

2*dly*, By propounding wrong Ends to themselves in Hearing. For some come to Church only out of custom, and for fashion's sake; others to make a shew of some Religion, and to maintain a Credit and Reputation that way; others come more to see and meet their Neighbours, and to talk of their worldly Affairs, than to hear from God, or to mind the business of their Souls. Others again come not so much to learn, or edify in Grace and Knowledg, which are the true Ends of Hearing, as to please themselves with the Sound and Rhetorick of the Sermon; or, which is worse, to censure and carp at it: and instead of applying to themselves what mostly concerns them, and amending by it, only snear and snarl at it, like Swine trampling upon Pearls, and with the Cock in the Fable preferring a Barley-Corn before a Jewel. All these being Hearers only, and not Doers of the Word, do but deceive themselves to their own destruction.

Such as these are in the next words compar'd to *a Man beholding his natural Face in a Glass, and having there beheld himself, goeth his way, and straitway forgetteth what manner of Man he was.* Where the Word of God is liken'd to a Mirrour or Looking-Glass, which reflects a Man's Image or Pourtraiture to him, shewing what kind of Person he is. The hearing of the Word is as it were the looking into this Glass, to behold the Spots or Blemishes of the Face, or whatever else is amiss in him, to the end that he may

amend and ſet all things right by it. But the way of too many is to look on, and to look off preſently, and ſo forget what manner of Men they were; forbearing to reform or rectify any thing that was out of order. Such, St. *James* tells us, are the Hearers of the Word without doing it; they have a tranſient View and Sight of themſelves, and behold as in a Glaſs the Faults and Errors of their ways, but quickly go their way, and forget to amend any thing that is amiſs: yea, ſome are drawn from hence to caſt off all Attendance upon the Word, that they may not hear their Faults, or learn their Duty. And as *Lais*, the *Corinthian* Harlot, broke her Looking-Glaſs, becauſe it ſhew'd her the Wrinkles and Deformity of her Face; ſo theſe lay aſide their Bibles for the ſame reaſon, and come not to the Light of God's Word, leſt their Deeds ſhould be reprov'd.

Whereas he that is not a Hearer only, but a Doer of the Word, is compar'd to one *that looketh into the perfect Law of Liberty, and continueth therein; who being not a forgetful Hearer, but Doer of the Work, ſhall be bleſſed in his Deed:* that is, he that ſo looketh into the Glaſs of the Goſpel, as to dreſs himſelf thereby, to wipe off his Spots, and to adorn himſelf and his Converſation; will appear fair and beautiful in the eyes of God and Men, and ſhall be bleſſed in his Deed. He ſhall be bleſſed with the Knowledg of Divine Truths; for *he that doth the Will of my Father, he ſhall know the Truth whether it be of God*: John 7. He ſhall be bleſſed with Grace here, to help in time of need, and in the end be crown'd with everlaſting Glory.

Thus we ſee the Happineſs of thoſe who join Hearing and Doing together, and the Miſery of thoſe that ſeparate or put them aſunder.

Now the Word of God, which we are here taught to hear and do, directs us chiefly in the well-governing of our Words and Works; in the regulating and well-ordering whereof, a great part of our Religion conſiſts.

As for our Words, the next Verſe tells us, that *if any Men among you ſeem to be religious, and bridleth not his Tongue, but deceiveth his own Heart; that Man's Religion is vain.* Where the Apoſtle ſuppoſes,

1ſt, That a Man may ſeem to be Religious, and not be truly and really ſo; for many may come and hear the Word of God, and ſit before him as his People, willing to know and do his Will, and yet after neither remember

nor

nor obſerve any thing of it. Of theſe we find God himſelf complaining, that they *draw nigh to him with their Lips, when their Hearts are far from him.* St. *Paul* tells us, that in the latter days, into which we are fallen, Men would *have a Form of Godlineſs, and yet deny the Power thereof*; from whom he wills us to turn away as Hypocrites and Pretenders, that have only the Shew of Religion, without the Subſtance and Reality of it.

2*dly*, The Apoſtle here adds, that an unbridled Tongue is a ſign of ſuch falſe and hypocritical Religion; for he that ſeems to be religious, and bridleth not his Tongue, his Religion is all but vain. The Pſalmiſt ſpeaks of ſome, who boaſt that their *Tongues are their own, who is Lord over them?* and ſo let them looſe to all ſcurrilous, backbiting, and detracting Language; by which they pervert the End of Speech, and abuſe it to the diſhonour of God and our Neighbour. Now true Religion puts a Bridle upon this unruly Member, that keeps it from running into ſuch Extravagancies, and confines it to the Rules of Decency and Diſcretion. Indeed ſuch as are Hearers only, are too apt to uſe their Tongues to ſuch evil purpoſes, as we may ſee in Sectaries and Hypocrites, who uſe their Tongues more to the cenſuring and reviling of others, than to the reforming or amending of themſelves: but the Doers of the Word are taught carefully to avoid theſe things; and ſuch, with *David*, keep their Mouths as it were with a Bridle, to reſtrain their Exorbitance, and diligently take heed to their ways, that they offend not with their Tongue. They that do otherwiſe, do but flatter themſelves with vain Hopes, if they think their Religion will ſtand them in any ſtead. For the Apoſtle here tells them, they do *but deceive their own Hearts with a vain Religion*, and others with vain Pretences. I know, many that are great Frequenters of Sermons and Lectures, and ſo much for hearing, will think it ſtrange to be thought Deceivers of their own Hearts; and will take it ill, that ſuch knowing Men as they ſhould be reckon'd among the Fools that put a cheat upon themſelves. We find the *Phariſees* did ſo, who thought none like them for Knowledg and Holineſs; and yet our Saviour, becauſe *they ſaid and did not*, often calls them *Fools and blind*. And if they thought their empty Show of Holineſs would bring them to Heaven, they deceiv'd themſelves; for Publicans and Sinners, that made no ſuch Shows, ſhould enter there before them. St. *Paul* ſpeaks of ſome that *were always learning*,

learning, but never came to the knowledg of the Truth: they were much for hearing and talking, but little for doing; and ſo never attain'd to any true Knowledg, which conſiſts in Practice, but only to a jangling ſort of Knowledg, that conſiſts in *ſtriving about Words, or Oppoſition of Science falſly ſo call'd.* And ſo reſting in Words without Deeds, as too many ſtill do, they deceive themſelves, and their Religion is vain; for that is deſign'd not only to regulate our Words, but to promote good Works.

So the laſt Words of this Day's Epiſtle declare: *Pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this; to viſit the Fatherleſs and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep himſelf unſpotted from the World:* that is, the Religion that conſiſts in doing as well as hearing, reſts not in an outward Profeſſion only, but is evermore accompany'd with the Practice of good Works; ſuch as Charity to the Needy and Diſtreſſed, expreſs'd here by *viſiting the Fatherleſs and Widows in their Affliction*; and Purity of Life and Converſation, expreſs'd by *keeping our ſelves unſpotted from the World.* This St. *James* here calls *pure and undefiled Religion before God and the Father*; becauſe they who do theſe things will be found without ſpot or blame before God our heavenly Father. The Works of Charity are expreſs'd here by *viſiting the Fatherleſs and Widows*, who being bereav'd of thoſe Relations that ſhould ſupport them, are left in a helpleſs Condition, and ſo caſt by Providence upon the Care and Charity of others to aſſiſt them: The doing whereof, is a good Work of Charity, that is agreeable to true Religion, and will be attended with a good Reward; but the Neglect of it is an Argument of great Uncharitableneſs, that is contrary to Religion, and will in the end meet with a ſuitable Puniſhment.

Purity of Life is here expreſs'd by *keeping our ſelves unſpotted from the World:* that is, by abſtaining from all filthy Luſts, which defile both Body and Soul, and avoiding all the evil Examples and Temptations of the World, which leave a ſtain or ſpot upon the Reputation of all that follow them.

From this Day's Epiſtle ſo unfolded, we learn,

1. The great Duty of hearing of God's Word; that we be not ſlack, but ſwift to hear it, longing for it as for our appointed Food, and labouring to digeſt it by Prayer and Meditation, that it may turn to the Nouriſhment and Comfort

ſort of our Souls. St. *Peter* wills us *as new-born Babes to deſire the ſincere Milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby*; 1 Pet. 2. 1, 2. that is, to crave it with the ſame Eagerneſs of Appetite, and likewiſe with the ſame Simplicity and Freedom from Prejudice, as a ſucking Child does the Mother's Breaſt. St. *Paul* exhorts, that the *Word of God may dwell in us richly in all Wiſdom*; and to that end to give attendance and attention to it, not forſaking the aſſembling our ſelves for that purpoſe, but rather ſaying with *Samuel*, *Speak Lord, for thy Servant heareth.* But yet,

2. Let us not reſt contented with the bare hearing, or think our Work is over when the Sermon is ended; for our Work then begins: which is, to ſet our ſelves to the practice of what we have heard, that our profiting may appear unto God, and to all Men. Let us not deceive our ſelves with an empty Sound of Religion in the Ear, or think that God will be mock'd with ſuch vain and ſuperficial Services; but let the Word ſink from the Ear into the Heart, and from thence appear in our Lives and Converſations, that we may reap the fruit and benefit of it: otherwiſe all our Hearing will but inflame our Reckoning, and increaſe our Condemnation; for he that knoweth his Maſter's Will, and doth it not, ſhall be beaten with many Stripes. I ſhall conclude with the words of our Saviour, *If you know theſe things, happy are ye if ye do them.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE LXXVII.

The GOSPEL for the Fifth Sunday after *Easter*.

St. John xvi. 23, to the end.

Verily, Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name, he will give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my Name: Ask and ye shall receive, that your Joy may be full. These things have I spoken to you in Proverbs, &c.

IN the foregoing part of this Chapter, our Saviour had been discoursing his Disciples concerning his leaving of the World, and ascending up into Heaven, to prepare them for it, and to support them under it.

In the Gospel for this Day, which closes the Chapter, he adds some farther Directions about praying to him when he was gone, and Patience under any Sufferings that might befal them for his sake.

The Gospel begins with an Encouragement to Prayer, from an Assurance of an Answer and Success in it. *Verily, verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name, he will give it you.* The Terms *verily, verily I say unto you*, denote not only the great Weight and Consequence, but the undoubted Truth and Certainty of what comes after it; as may be seen in sundry Places of Scripture, where this Asseveration is us'd.

Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father, that is agreeable to his Will, and sutable to your Wants and Necessities, *he will give unto you*; if not presently, yet in due time; and if not in the same kind, yet in something better and more convenient for you. Only the Manner and Circumstance of asking must be *in my Name*; that is, for my sake, for my Merits, and in virtue of my Atonement, which was not compleated till my Death, when the Debt for your Sins was fully paid, and the Satisfaction to Divine Justice own'd and accepted by my Resurrection for our Justification: which

which made him say, *Hitherto have ye ask'd nothing in my Name*; nor could they well do it till his Ascension into Heaven, when, as the *High-Priest enter'd into the Holy of Holies with the Blood of the Atonement*, there to plead it in the behalf of the People; so *Christ enter'd into the highest Heavens, there to appear in the presence of God for us.* So that this asking in Christ's Name was a new Form of Prayer, that was not used before, and commenc'd not till his ascending up into Heaven: after which, he bid them *ask and ye shall receive, that your Joy may be full*; meaning, that their Requests should be granted, for the supply of all their Wants, and the fulfilling of all their Joys. And hence all our Prayers ever since have been and still are offer'd up in Christ's Name, and through his Merits and Mediation for us. *These things* (saith he) *have I spoken unto you in Proverbs*; being deliver'd to you in mystical and mysterious Sayings and Parables, which have something of Darkness in them, on purpose to put you upon the greater Search and Inquiry into them. *But the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in Proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father*: that is, the time draws near when the Holy Ghost shall come down upon you, and then he will for all these things more plainly before you, according to the Pleasure and Promise of the Father, who hath thus order'd matters in his Church. For *when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he shall guide you into all Truth, and shew you things to come*; ver. 13. He shall give you a clearer Light, and more lively Apprehensions of these divine and heavenly Matters.

In that Day (saith he) *ye shall ask in my Name; and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God*: that is, from the Day of Christ's Ascension, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost upon them, they were to put up all their Petitions in Christ's Name. And this Benefit (saith he) you receive by these things, that you shall not need my offering up your Prayers for you; but you may, in my name, offer them up your selves unto God, who himself loveth you, and will accept and answer what you ask of him; and that because of your Love to me, and your Faith in me, that I was sent by him to this end.

God the Father cannot chuse but love those that love his Son, there is that mutual Kindness and Sympathy between them, that extends as far as each other's Affections reach.

The

The Love of Parents (you know) descends to their Children; and the Love of Friends enlarges it self to their Relations and Allies: and God Almighty will not fail to take those within the Compass of his Care and Affections, that love his only begotten and dearly beloved Son. Love (we say) is the Loadstone of Love, it hath a secret and magnetick force to attract and draw the Affections, and 'tis almost unnatural not to love those that love us. Besides, Likeness is a known Cause of Love; and there is that exact Similitude and Harmony between the Father and the Son, that the Love of the one draws the Love of the other, and strongly engages the Affections of both.

Now God's loving of us, is here grounded upon our Love and Faith in his Son, by believing him to be the Messias, and that he came out from God; and that he did so, Christ declares in the next words, *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the World*, and both by his Order and Appointment: so that the receiving of me, is the receiving of him; and he that rejects the Son, rejects the Father also. *Again, I leave the World* (saith he) *and go to the Father*, being altogether at his Disposal, for the carrying on and compleating the Work of Man's Redemption. He that firmly believes and relies upon this, will be lov'd of the Father, who will hear his Prayers, and answer the Petitions put up to him in his Son's Name. By which we see, that the way to gain the Love of God is to believe in Christ, to take him for the Saviour of the World, and to depend upon his Merits for all our Happiness and Salvation.

Upon the hearing of this Discourse, the Disciples said unto him, *Lo! now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no Proverb*; ver. 29. This is plain Doctrine, and easy to be understood and receiv'd by us: He had before spoken to them in Parables and dark Sayings, that wanted a Key to unfold them; he had wrapt up the knowledg of Divine Truths in Mysteries and Proverbs, that were hard to be understood: but here he spake more intelligibly, and open'd his Mind more clearly and fully to them.

Christ was wont to teach his Followers slowly, as they were able to bear it, and to instil Knowledg by Degrees, as they were able to receive it, which is the best Way and Method of Instruction. He that would infuse Liquor into a narrow-mouth'd Vessel, must do it gently, and by degrees, and not pour in all at once; for then it will run by,

and

and instead of filling the Bottle, will spill the Liquor, and leave it empty. In like manner, he that will infuse Knowledg into narrow and shallow Understandings, must not give them too much together, for then they will learn nothing; but by little and little they may get something, and by easy Steps come to the knowledg of the Truth. This was the Course that Christ took with his Disciples; he instructed them by degrees, and from lower put them into higher Forms; he taught them by Parables to exercise their Understandings, and when they could not find the Drift or Meaning of them, he unfolded them unto them. He often told them, that he had many things to impart to them, but they could not bear them yet; and 'tis not for you to know the Times, and the Seasons, and the like. But here, a little before his Ascension, he discover'd things more freely and fully to them, and without Parables and Proverbs plainly reveal'd Matters to them; which made them say, *Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any Man should ask thee; by this we believe that thou camest forth from God*: ver. 30. Now we are convinc'd of thy Omniscience, that thou hast a perfect Knowledg of all Divine Truths, by thy revealing of them so evidently unto us of thine own accord. 'Tis probable that Christ prevented them in some Questions they were about to put to him, by an Answer already given in his discoursing with them; and this might occasion their Saying, *Thou needest not that any Man should ask thee.* From whence they proceeded to declare their Faith in him, that they were now fully satisfy'd that he was sent from God, and that he came into the World on purpose to reveal his Father's Will. By which we see that the Excellence of Christ's Doctrine, as well as the Greatness of his Miracles, was a convincing Proof and Demonstration of his Messiahship; for the Disciples here were fully convinc'd by it, and declar'd their Resolution of standing firm and stedfast to their Faith in him.

Our Saviour perceiving their Confidence, said unto them, *Do ye now believe?* Do you already presume upon the Strength and Constancy of your Faith in me? Alas! your Faith is not so strong or firm as you take it to be; you speak very confidently of your Belief in me now, whilst Danger seems to be at a distance from you; but you will find it otherwise, when Trouble and Tribulation draws nearer to you: And to tell you the truth, you will

be

be ſhortly put to the Trial of it, and ſuch a ſhock is hard at hand which you will not be able to bear: *For behold the Hour cometh* (ſaith he) *yea is now come, that ye ſhall be ſcatter'd every Man to his own Home, and ſhall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, becauſe the Father is with me:* that is, the Time is drawing nigh, when you will all fly and forſake me, and go every one to his own Home: for as when the Shepherd is ſmitten, the Sheep are ſcatter'd, and go every one their own way; ſo when Trouble and Anguiſh cometh upon me, you will all forſake me, and ſhift for your ſelves, and leave me alone. And ſo it prov'd; for at his Paſſion they all fled from him, and left him to himſelf, St. *Peter* deny'd him with bitter Oaths and Execrations, and none ſtaid by him at his Croſs ſave *John* the beloved Diſciple; and yet (ſaith he) I am not left altogether deſtitute, for God is with me to aſſert the Juſtice and Innocence of my Cauſe. Now this may teach us,

1*ſt*, Never to preſume too much upon our own Strength, or to raiſe our Confidence too high upon the Firmneſs of our Faith: for we ſee St. *Peter*'s Faith, tho built, as he thought, upon a Rock, yet fail'd him; and *David*'s Confidence, which in his Proſperity he took to be as firm and immovable as a Mountain, was yet ſhaken by a little Adverſity. And if thoſe great Champions and Pillars of the Church were thus ſhaken, we may very well learn that Leſſon of the Apoſtle, *Be not high-minded, but fear.*

2*ly*, We learn hence to pray to God, and rely upon the Comforts of his Preſence, who will ſtand by us, when all others forſake us. Chriſt found himſelf not alone, when his Diſciples were gone, becauſe his Father was with him; and Chriſtians will never want the Preſence and Aſſiſtance of both, if they ſtick to him; for he is a conſtant Friend, and hath promis'd never to leave us nor forſake us. *Theſe things* (ſaith our Saviour in the cloſe of the Chapter) *I have ſpoken unto you, that in me ye might have Peace; in the World ye ſhall have Tribulation, but be of good chear, I have overcome the World.* In which words he forewarn'd them of the Difficulties they might meet with in his Abſence, to prevent Surprize, and forearm them againſt them, by a Promiſe of Peace, and all needful Bleſſings.

Now this being the great End and Uſe of this Diſcourſe of our Saviour to his Diſciples, a little before he aſcended up into Heaven, 'twill be requiſite a little to improve and inlarge upon it. And here we may obſerve,

1. His

1. His telling them what they were to expect when he was gone; *In the World ye shall have Tribulation.*

2. His administring Comfort and Cordials to them to support them under it; *But be of good chear.*

3. The Ground and Reason of his Consolation; *For I have overcome the World.* Of each a word or two. And,

1. Of the hard Usage they were to expect when he was gone from them; *In the World ye shall have Tribulation.* This Christ himself met with in it, and *the Disciple is not above his Lord*; we must go by the Cross, as he did, to the Crown, and *thro many Tribulations enter into the Kingdom of God.* This the Apostles and Primitive Christians likewise found, who drank deep of this bitter Cup; and *all that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer Persecution.* The Envy and Malice of the World will fasten on those that live above it, and belong not to it: *The World* (saith our Saviour) *will love its own; but because I have chosen you out of the World, therefore the World hateth you: but marvel not* (as he adds) *if the World hate you, for it hated me before it hated you*; and perhaps hates you the more for my sake, who have taught you to renounce and despise it. *The World will love its own*; that is, those that admire and set their Hearts upon it: but it tramples upon those that are dead to it, and aspire after nobler Objects. Daily Experience shews what Sufferings and Troubles good Men are expos'd to in the World, what Violence is offer'd to their Persons, what Spoil is made of their Goods, what Reproach and Infamy is cast upon their Name; in a word, what Injuries and Indignities of all kinds they undergo at the hands of the Wicked. This hath been the Lot of all our Forerunners in the Faith, and is still the Portion of the best of Men, who are malign'd, hated, and persecuted by the World. *Many are the Troubles of the Righteous* (saith holy *David*) *but the Lord delivereth them out of all*; Psal. 34. 19. And this will lead me,

2. To the Comforts and Cordials administred by our Saviour under these Tribulations, in these words, *But be of good chear*; that is, be not dismay'd at any Trouble that may befal you here, they are but short Trials of your Faith and Patience, which are intended only for your Good; and if you bear them manfully, will in the end add a brighter Lustre to your Crown of Glory. Christ pronounces those Blessed that suffer *for Righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* And again, *Happy are*

ye when Men ſhall revile you and perſecute you, and ſpeak all manner of Evil of you falſly for my ſake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven; for ſo perſecuted they the Prophets that were before you: Mat. 5. 10, 11, 12. St. *Paul* ſtirs up the *Philippians, to rejoice in the Lord always*, even when they were under a heavy Perſecution; and leſt they ſhould think that an improper time for Joy, he doubles the Exhortation, *And again, I ſay, rejoice*; Phil. 4. 1. St. *James* bids us, *to count it all Joy, when we fall into divers Temptations*; Jam. 1. 2. Look upon it as the joyfulleſt thing that can happen unto you, to be exercis'd with Afflictions, for thereby you are made conformable unto Chriſt, and by ſuffering with him awhile, ſhall e'er long be glorify'd together. This is a Cordial ſtrong enough to bear us up under the greateſt Sufferings; and inſtead of *fainting*, will help us *to rejoice in Tribulation*: and this is what our Saviour means, in bidding us here, *to be of good chear.*

Not that we are to be altogether inſenſible of Pain, and to have no Feeling at all of the Uneaſineſs of any Miſery or Torment; for that neither does Nature allow, or Religion require. Our Saviour himſelf felt the Bitterneſs of his Cup, and groan'd in the Pangs and Agonies of his Paſſion; and no Affliction for the preſent can be joyous, but grievous. The Rants of the Stoicks, concerning the Pleaſure of Pain, the Sweetneſs of a Rack, and the Delight of Tortures, were but the empty Boaſts of their Pride and Vanity: for neither Philoſophy nor Religion can ſo far extirpate or extinguiſh the Paſſions of human Nature, as to take off all Senſe or Feeling of Pain; but both of them teach us ſo far to vanquiſh and ſubdue them by the Senſe of the Divine Love and Care of us, as to be able to ſuſtain it with Courage and Conſtancy: and to be of good chear, is to bear up under it, not only with Patience, but Alacrity and Chearfulneſs. But here Care muſt be taken, that the Sufferings we thus manfully ſuſtain be of God's ſending, in his Cauſe, and for his ſake; not of our own creating, or ſuch as we draw upon our ſelves by our own Faults or Follies: for to bear up under theſe, is rather Fool-hardineſs than Patience, and no Comfort can be taken in ſuch Sufferings; but *if ye ſuffer for Chriſt's, or for Righteouſneſs-ſake, rejoice, inaſmuch as ye are Partakers of Chriſt's Sufferings, that when his Glory ſhall be reveal'd, ye alſo may be glad with exceeding Joy:* 1 Pet. 4. 13.

3. But

3. But what is the Motive or Argument of Conſolation here us'd, to bear chearfully the Tribulations of the World? Why, 'tis from Chriſt's Victory over the World; *Be of good chear* (ſaith he) *for I have overcome the World.* Where by the World we are to underſtand the Temptations, Trials, and Troubles of the World, the Spite and Malice of wicked Men, with all the Evils that may befal us in it. By overcoming the World, is meant a gaining of an abſolute Power and Conqueſt over it, ſo that it can do no conſiderable Harm or Prejudice; and this is the Victory obtain'd by our Saviour over it. He overcame the Temptations of the World by the power of his Grace, ſo that all the Allurements of it cannot hurt us, without our own Conſent and yielding to them; for he hath reſcu'd us from their Captivity, unleſs we will become willing Bond-ſlaves to them. He overcame the Troubles and Tribulations of the World, not by ſhrinking from, but undergoing of them; whereby he hath taken out all the Bitterneſs of Afflictions, and left us only the Sweetneſs and Comfort of them: He pluck'd out the Sting of Death by dying, and loos'd the Bands of the Grave, by being a while holden of them; and after triumph'd over both by the power of his Reſurrection. He overcame the Malice of the World, by defeating the Deſigns of Men and Devils againſt his Church and People, turning their Cruelty and Cunning againſt themſelves, and making them the Inſtruments of their own Ruin, and the Church's Happineſs. In a word, Chriſt hath overcome the Force of all preſent Evils by the help of his Grace, and remov'd the Fears of future, by the hopes of Glory.

But how does this Victory over the World tend to our Conſolation? Why, very much; for the Battle was fought, and the Victory obtain'd merely for us: 'twere our Enemies that were foil'd and routed by it, and we are made Partakers of the Joys and Triumph acquir'd by it. He enter'd the Liſts, not as a private Perſon or common Soldier, but as our General, and the Captain of our Salvation; he was the great Repreſentative of all Mankind: and as he came into the World, ſuffer'd and dy'd in it for our ſakes; ſo did he riſe again, triumph, and aſcend up to Heaven in our behalf; by all which we are *made more than Conquerors thro Chriſt that loved us.* And is not this matter of unſpeakable Joy and Comfort to all good Chriſtians, to ſhare in the Succeſſes of their Saviour, and to

bear a part in the Glories and Triumphs of ſuch a mighty Conqueror?

Be of good chear then, ye Fellow-Soldiers in Chriſt Jeſus, *quit your ſelves like Men; be ſtrong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might.* What, tho the World may ſet upon you with all its Troubles and Temptations? Why, they are both vanquiſh'd for you by your Lord and Maſter; and if you reſiſt, they will ſoon flee from you: The World may hate, but cannot hurt you; it may allure and ſhew you its bright ſide, but if you are aware, it cannot wound or entrap you. Your Saviour deſpis'd the Offer of all the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glories of them, when made to him upon unworthy Terms; and was therefore rewarded with the Kingdom of Heaven, which infinitely exceeds all earthly Kingdoms, and to which they are all tributary and ſubſervient.

Let us therefore *look unto Jeſus the Author and Finiſher of our Faith, who, for the Glory that was ſet before him, endur'd the Croſs, and deſpis'd the Shame, and is ſet down at the Right Hand of the Majeſty on High.* Let not the Smiles of the World betray, nor the Frowns of it diſmay us; for greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the World. Let not the Splendor of it dazzle, nor the Terrors of it put out our Eyes; but let us look thro both to him that hath ſhew'd us the Shortneſs and Vanity of them: In a word, let us have recourſe to our Saviour in all our Troubles, and rely upon him who hath overcome the World for us already, and will ſhortly advance us above it to the higheſt Heavens. Which God grant, *&c.*

The End of the Firſt Part of the Fourth Volume.

AN
Alphabetical Table
To the First Part of the Fourth Volume.

A.

ABOVE, *what's meant by Things above.* p. 502. *Vid.* Things above.

Abraham, *how said to see Christ's Day and rejoice in it.* 427, 428

Adam, *how all died in him.* 497

Adoption, *what is meant by it.* 130. *The great Advantages of it.* 130, 131. *God's wonderful Love therein.* 259. *The Improvement we should make of it.* 265, 266

Advent, *the meaning of it.* 1. *Why four Sundays before* Christmas *are so call'd.* ibid. *The Epistle and Gospel for the first Sunday therein explain'd.* 1——17. *Vid.* Epistles. *Vid.* Gospels.

Affections, *how we must set them on things above.* 503, 504

Alive to God, *several things imply'd in it.* 491, 492

Angels, *their Inferiority to Christ in several respects.* 73, 74. *Why they directed Men to Gospel-Ministers.* 518

Anointed, *the meaning of Christ's being so call'd.* 520

Anthems *for* Easter-Day *explain'd and apply'd.* 479——499

Apostles (*of Christ*) *their Dullness of Understanding at first.* 321, 322. *The Occasion of their Ignorance.* 323. *The Largeness of our Lord's Commission to them.* 552——554. *The Meaning of Christ's breathing upon them.* 555. *Their Power of binding and loosing explain'd.* 556, 567

Apparel (*of the Soul*) *wherein it consists.* 241——244. *The Means of being cloth'd with it.* 247, 248

Armour of Light, *the meaning of it.* 7

Ascension (*of Christ*) *the Expediency of it.* 603, 604, *How 'twas necessary in order to the Spirit's coming.* 605, 606

B.

BAptism, *how 'tis said to save us.* 470

Blessedness, *wherein that promis'd to* Abraham *consisted.* 143. *To whom it belong'd.* 144

Boasting *may sometimes be necessary.* 300

Bodies, *in what ſenſe we are to preſent ours to God.* 176. *How we muſt preſent them.* 177——181. *An Exhortation to devote them to God.* 181, 182

Burial, *the Care antiently taken about the Place of it.* 474. *How our Saviour came to have one, the contrary to the* Roman *Laws.* 475

C.

CAreaſe, *how the* Jews *were ſo call'd.* 271

Charity, *the Preference of it to all other Gifts.* 310, 311. *The Nature and Properties of it.* 312——316. *The perpetual Duration of it.* 317

Chriſt, *his Coming twofold.* 1, 2. *Vid.* Second Coming. *What's meant by* putting him on. 7, 8. *His humble Entrance into* Jeruſalem. 10——12. *The pompous manner of his Reception.* 12——16. *Why he is call'd the Word.* 77, 78. *Why he is ſtil'd Light and Life.* 79. *How he was rejected by his own.* 80. *How he dignify'd them who receiv'd him.* 81. *How he is ſaid to pitch his Tabernacle among us.* 82. *How his Glory appear'd after his Incarnation.* 84. *How he lamented the Obſtinacy of Sinners.* 97. *Is truly a Man.* 234. *Excellently accommodated his Diſcourſes to the Capacity of his Hearers.* 302. *How ſaid to be before* Abraham. 429. *What Reaſon we have to rejoice in him.* 430. *How ſaid to be in the Form of God.* 433. *His wonderful Abaſement.* 434, 435. *His high Exaltation.* 436, 437. *How we ſhould honour his Name.* 438, 440. *How he was apprehended by his Enemies.* 441, 442. *An Account of his being arraign'd.* 443. *The Manner of his Condemnation.* 444. *The Execution of the Sentence againſt him.* 445——448. *Several uſeful Inſtructions ariſing from his Paſſion.* 449. *How Blood and Water iſſu'd from his Side.* 464. *Our Obligations to be ſtedfaſt in his Religion.* 465. *What we are taught by his Death and Reſurrection.* 471, 472. *How his Reſurrection was confirm'd.* 488, 489. *How ſaid to* die to Sin, *and* live to God. 489, 490. *How all are made alive in him.* 497, 498. *Reaſons of his Death and Reſurrection.* 540, 541. *Deals very tenderly with his Diſciples.* 590, 609

Chriſtmas, *the Epiſtle for it explain'd.* 68——76. *The Goſpel for it expounded.* 77——85. *Vid.* Nativity.

Church, *the different Offices and Functions of its Members.* 192. *The various Gifts of the ſeveral Members of it.* 192, 193. *Chriſt's Care of it.* 287, 288

Church (*or Place for Divine Worſhip*) *the due Regard to be had for it.* 17

Circumciſion, *the Nature and Uſe of it.* 142. *Why defer'd till the eighth Day.* 153, 154. *Why our Lord ſubmitted to this Ceremony.* 143, 146, 147, 154, 155. ——*Of the Heart, what is meant by it.* 148. *How this is to be ſought after.* 149

Clergy, *their Office and Dignity.* 35. *The Peoples Duty to them.* 36. *Their Duty to the People.* 37. *The too great Proneneſs of ſome to cenſure*

cenſure them. 38. *How they ſhould bear unjuſt Cenſures.* 39. *Their Dignity and Duty aſſerted.* 557
Conference, *the Benefit of that which is religious.* 528
Conſcience, *the Danger of ſinning againſt it.* 464, 465
Credulous, *we ſhould avoid being overmuch ſo.* 529
Curioſity, *about things of little Concern, to be avoided.* 112

D.

DArkneſs, *what's meant by the Works of it.* 6, 7. *How 'tis ſaid not to be at all in God.* 103. *The Ignorance and Danger of the State of Sinners ſet forth by it.* ——384, 385
Day, *the myſtical Senſe of it in Scripture.* 4, 5. *How* Abraham *was ſaid to ſee that of Chriſt.* 427, 428
Dead to Sin, *what is meant by it.* 490, 491
Dead with Chriſt, *how Chriſtians are ſo.* 504
Death, *why Sin is ſo call'd.* 388. *The Dominion of it is deſtroy'd by our Saviour.* 488, 489
Deſpiſing *Chriſtianity, the exceeding Danger of it.* 535, 536
Devils, *witty Remarks on their poſſeſſing the Swine.* 239, 240. *Their Diligence in oppoſing Chriſt's Intereſt.* 255, 257. *When People may be ſaid to be poſſeſs'd by them.* 373——375. *How Chriſt vindicated his Divine Power in caſting them out.* 391——393. *Chriſt's Power over them is a Chriſtian's Incouragement.* 396
Diligence *both in Religion and in our ſecular Callings recommended.* 196
Diſciples (*of Chriſt*) *the Weakneſs of their Faith at Chriſt's Paſſion.* 524——526, *How our Lord rebuk'd and ſatisfy'd them.* 526——528. *The plain Proofs he gave them of his Reſurrection.* 537, 538
Doers of the Word, *what meant by it.* 613, 614
Dumb Devil, *what may be underſtood by it.* 390

E.

EAgles, *why the* Romans *are ſo call'd.* 271
Egypt, *the Flight of our Saviour with his Parents thither.* 119. *The Idols of it were ſaid to fall before our Lord in his Infancy.* 120
Epiphany, *what it means.* 158, 161. *The Epiſtle for it explain'd.* 158——165. *The Goſpel for it open'd and apply'd.* 166——173
Epiſtle *for the firſt Sunday in* Advent *explain'd.* 1——9. *For the ſecond.* 18——25. *For the third.* 34——42. *And for the fourth expounded.* 51——59. *For* Chriſtmas-Day *explain'd.* 68——76. *For St.* Stephen's *Day.* 85——92. *For St.* John's *Day.* 99——106. *For the* Innocents *Day.* 113——118. *For Sunday after* Chriſtmas. 125——133. *For Chriſt's Circumciſion.* 142——150. *For the* Epiphany. 158——165. *For the firſt Sunday after.* 174——182. *For the ſecond.* 191——199. *For the third.* 207——215. *For the fourth.* 224——232. *For*

the fifth. 241——248. *And for the ſixth Sunday after* Epiphany *expounded.* 258——266. *For* Septuageſima *Sunday.* 275——284. *For* Sexageſima *Sunday.* 293——300. *For* Quinquageſima *Sunday.* 309——318. *For* Aſh-Wedneſday, 327——335. *For the firſt Sunday in* Lent. 345——353. *For the ſecond.* 363——371. *For the third.* 380——389. *For the fourth.* 398——405. *And for the fifth Sunday in* Lent *explain'd.* 414——422. *For the Sunday before* Eaſter. 431——440. *For* Good-Friday. 450——457. *For* Eaſter-Eve. 466——472. *For* Eaſter-Day. 500——507. *For* Eaſter-Monday. 517——523. *And for* Eaſter-Tueſday *expounded.* 530——536. *For the firſt Sunday after* Eaſter. 541——550. *For the ſecond.* 558——566. *For the third.* 576——584. *For the fourth.* 593——601. *And for the fifth Sunday after* Eaſter *explain'd.* 611——619

Examples, *'tis our Wiſdom to propoſe the beſt to our ſelves.* 432

F.

FAith, *an eminent Inſtance of it in the Woman of* Canaan. 375——377

Falſe Chriſts, *who meant by them.* 268

Falſe Prophets *deſcrib'd.* 269. *Their Methods to deceive.* 269, 270. *How we may ſecure our ſelves from them.* 273, 274

Falſe Teachers, *the ill Characters of them.* 294, 295. *We muſt beware of them.* 299

Faſt, *how to be ſolemniz'd in publick.* 332, 333

Faſting (*religious*) *the Nature of it.* 337——339. *The right Way of performing it.* 339——341. *The peculiar Seaſons for it.* 341, 342. *The Reward of it.* 342, 343

Feaſt, *Chriſt's firſt Miracle wrought at one.* 203. *Vid.* Marriage-Feaſt. ——*Of the Goſpel-Paſſover, what it is.* 483. *How 'tis to be kept by us.* 484, 485

Firſt, *how they may become the laſt.* 284

Firſt-Fruits (*of the Dead*) *how Chriſt is ſaid to be ſo.* 493——495

Fleſhly Luſts, *contrary to the Chriſtian Profeſſion.* 576. *How we muſt abſtain from them.* 577. *The Reaſonableneſs of abſtaining from them.* 577, 578

Follow Chriſt, *what is meant by it.* 106, 107

Fragments, *how eminently Chriſt's Power appeared in them.* 410

Fulneſs of Time, *what is meant by this Phraſe.* 126

G.

GEntiles, *St.* Paul *ſuffer'd much for them.* 158, 159. *Under the Goſpel,* Fellow-Heirs *with the* Jews. 160. *God's great Love to them to be ador'd.* 163. *The happy Change wrought in their State by Chriſtianity.* 164, 165, 379. *Their coming into the Church foretold by our Saviour.* 220, 221

Gifts (*of the Spirit*) *the variety of them.* 192. *How they are to be exercis'd.* 193. *How good and perfect Gifts may be diſtinguiſh'd.* 594

God, *why and how we muſt turn unto him.* 328——330. *The Incouragements we have to this.* 331, 332. *How and wherein we ſhould follow him.* 380——382. *How he is no Reſpecter of Perſons.* 519. *How all good things come from him.* 594, 595. *In what ſenſe Invariableneſs and Shadow of Turning are not with him.* 595, 596. *His peculiar Love to them who love his Son.* 621, 622

Goſpel, *the Privileges of it.* 346, 347. *What Duties its Privileges call for,* 347——351. *Not to be receiv'd in vain.* 346, 352

Goſpel *for the firſt Sunday in* Advent *explain'd.* 9——17. *For the ſecond.* 26——33. *For the third.* 43——51. *And for the fourth Sunday in* Advent *expounded.* 60——67. *For* Chriſtmas-Day. 77——85. *For St.* Stephen's *Day.* 92——99. *For St.* John's *Day.* 106——113. *For the* Innocents *Day.* 118——124. *For the Sunday after* Chriſtmas. 133——141. *For the Circumciſion of Chriſt.* 150——157. *For the* Epiphany. 166——173. *For the firſt Sunday.* 183——191. *For the ſecond.* 199——206. *For the third.* 216——224. *For the fourth.* 233——241. *For the fifth.* 249——258. *And for the ſixth Sunday after* Epiphany. 267——275. *For* Septuageſima *Sunday explain'd.* 284——292. *For* Sexageſima *Sunday,* 301——309. *For* Quinquageſima *Sunday.* 319——326. *For* Aſh-Wedneſday. 336——344. *For the firſt Sunday in* Lent. 353——362. *For the ſecond.* 372——379. *For the third.* 389——397. *For the fourth.* 406——414. *And for the fifth Sunday in* Lent. 423——431. *For the Sunday before* Eaſter. 441——450. *For* Good-Friday. 458——466. *For* Eaſter-Eve. 472——478. *For* Eaſter-Day. 508——516. *For* Eaſter-Monday. 523——529. *For* Eaſter-Tueſday. 537——541. *For the firſt Sunday after* Eaſter. 550——557. *For the ſecond.* 567——575. *For the third.* 585——592. *For the fourth.* 602——610. *And for the fifth Sunday after* Eaſter. 620——628

Goſpels and Epiſtles, *a Remark upon the wiſe ordering of them.* 500

Government, *the End and Uſefulneſs of it.* 229

Ground, *the ſeveral Sorts of it (in a ſpiritual ſenſe) explain'd.* 303——305

H.

HEaring (*God's Word*) *how it ſhould be done.* 305——309. *The Neceſſity of it.* 600, 601. *Some place all their Religion in it.* 612. *Some reject it under pretence of Doing.* 612, 613. *How by depending on it, without Obedience, People deceive themſelves.* 614. *Why 'tis compar'd to looking in a Glaſs.* 615

Heaven, *ſome Account of the Glories of it.* 114, 115, 117. *The Inhabitants of it deſcrib'd.* 116, 117

Heavenly-

Heavenly-Mindedneſs *recommended by our Saviour.* 343
Herod (*King of* Judea) *his Concern at hearing of Chriſt's Birth.* 168, 169
Higher Powers, *Subjection to them recommended.* 224. *How Subjection is to be expreſs'd to them.* 225. (*Vid.* Subjection.) *Who are meant by them.* 226. *The Evil and Danger of reſiſting them.* 226——228
Holy Spirit, *the Neceſſity of Chriſt's going to Heaven, in order to his Coming.* 605, 606. *His Work and Office towards Men.* 606, 607. *How his Coming glorify'd Chriſt.* 608
Holy Week, *why that before* Eaſter *was antiently ſo call'd.* 431
Honeſt, *what St.* Paul *might mean by it.* 211, 212
Hope (*of a Chriſtian*) *what it is.* 261. *The Effect of it is Purity of Heart and Life.* 262——265
Humility *was deſpis'd till Chriſt recommended it.* 432, 433
Hypocriſy, *evidenc'd by an unbridled Tongue.* 617
Hyſſop, *how us'd in applying Vinegar to our Saviour.* 463

I.

IDleneſs, *our Saviour an Enemy to it.* 286, 287
Jeſus (*a Saviour*) *how deſervedly our Lord was ſo call'd.* 155, 156. *Diſputes in the Temple at twelve Years of Age.* 186. *His human Soul increas'd in Wiſdom, as his Body in Stature.* 188. *His Exemplarineſs in his Youth.* 190, 191
Jews, *their Rejection foretold by our Saviour.* 221. *They were the Carcaſe ſought out by the* Roman *Eagles.* 271
Incarnation (*of Chriſt*) *the Myſtery of it ſet forth.* 81. *Vid.* Chriſt.
Innocents (*Children murder'd by* Herod) *the Epiſtle and Goſpel for their Day explain'd.* 113——124. *Account of their Martyrdom.* 122. *What we may learn from their Sufferings.* 123, 124
John (*the Baptiſt*) *the Meanneſs of his Appearance as Chriſt's Forerunner.* 43, 44. *Our Lord's Character of him.* 45, 46. *His Office as predicted by the Prophets.* 46, 47. *How he prepar'd the Way of the Lord.* 48——51. *The Account which he gave of his Miniſtry.* 60——65. *The eminent Vertues conſpicuous in him.* 65——67. *He was like the Morning-Star to the Sun of Righteouſneſs.* 79
John (*the Evangeliſt*) *the Epiſtle and Goſpel for his Day explain'd.* 99——113. *Why the Goſpel for* Good-Friday *is taken from him.* 458
Joſeph (*reputed Father of Chriſt*) *his Trouble about the Virgin's being with Child.* 136. *How he was ſatisfy'd by an Angel.* 137
Joſeph (*of* Arimathea) *his Character.* 473
Joy *in the Lord recommended.* 52, 53. *Differences between that of the Righteous and of the Wicked.* 590——592
Judas, *the Greatneſs of his Sin and Puniſhment.* 465

Judgment *of Men belongs finally to God only.* 40, 41.
Juſtice, *the Nature and Neceſſity of it.* 367——369

L.

LAſt, *how they may become firſt.* 284
Law, *how and when Chriſt was made under it.* 128. ——*Of* Moſes, *in what ſenſe Chriſtians are freed from it.* 398, 399
Lent, *the End of its being obſerv'd.* 334, 335, 345
Leper, *one who had two excellent Qualifications of a Petitioner.* 217
Liberty (*Chriſtian*) *wherein the right Uſe of it conſiſts.* 403. *We ought to defend and maintain it.* 404. *By whom 'tis infring'd.* 405
Life (*of a Chriſtian*) *ſet forth by many Reſemblances.* 276
Light, *in what ſenſe God is ſo call'd.* 102, 103. *How Chriſtians are ſaid to walk in it.* 104, 385, 386. *In what ſenſe 'tis promis'd in the Goſpel.* 388
Loaves, *the great Miracle of them explain'd and improv'd.* 408——413
Love *to God, our Neighbours, and our ſelves recommended.* 194, 195
Luſts. *Vid.* Fleſhly Luſts.

M.

MArriage-Feaſt, *Chriſt's Preſence at one, and Carriage there, conſider'd.* 204——206
Martyrs, *three ſorts of them mention'd by an antient Father.* 113
Mary (*the Mother of Chriſt*) *the Trouble ſhe met with.* 136. *How her Innocency was clear'd by an Angel.* 137. *Probably continu'd always a Virgin.* 139. *How far ſhe ought to be honour'd by us.* 140. *Her Concern at Chriſt's Sufferings, and his Care of her.* 462
Mediator, *what.* 416, 417. *How Chriſt came to be ours.* 417, 418. *The End of Chriſt's being ſo.* 420. *Several uſeful Inferences from it.* 420——422
Miniſters (*of the Goſpel*) *how ſent by Chriſt.* 94, 95. *The hard Uſage they meet with from the World.* 95. *How Chriſt reſents their ill Treatment.* 96. *Abuſing them, brings ſevere Deſtruction.* 97, 98. *With what Mildneſs they ſhould treat People.* 363, 364
Miracles, *why Chriſt ſometimes conceal'd his.* 218
Moderation, *the Nature of this Vertue.* 54, 55. *Exhorted to from the Lord's being at hand.* 56

N.

NAtivity *of Chriſt, Graces neceſſary to a right ſolemnizing of it.* 52——59. *The Circumſtances of it ſtrange and miraculous.* 133
New-Year, *we ſhould begin it with preſenting our ſelves to God.* 175
Night, *the myſtical Senſe of it in Scripture.* 3, 4

O.

OFfering, *how Christ by one perfects Believers.* 454. *Vid.* Sacrifice.

P.

PAlm-Sunday, *why that before* Easter *is so call'd.* 432
Parables, *why our Lord made frequent use of them.* 587
Passover, *what that of the* Jews *was.* 480. *How Christ is call'd ours.* 481. ——*Of the Gospel. Vid.* Feast.
Paul, *why call'd the Apostle of the* Gentiles. 158. *Suffer'd much for the sake of the* Gentiles. 158, 159. *Ascribes all his Abilities and Services to God's Grace.* 162. *His ironical speaking to the* Corinthians *paraphras'd.* 294. *Many things wherein he excell'd the false Apostles.* 294——299
Peace of God, *what's meant by it.* 244
Peaceably, *in what sense we must strive to live so with all Men.* 212, 213
Persecution, *Christians are warn'd of it to keep them humble.* 401
Pilate, *his Injustice in condemning our Saviour.* 460, 464. *The Punishment he met with for it.* 465
Poor, *our Saviour's Goodness to them.* 222
Possessions (*of the Devil*) *how they may be understood.* 373——375
Prayer, *Brevity therein recommended.* 236. *The Prevalency of it when hearty.* 237, 378. *To be persever'd in, tho not presently answer'd.* 378. *How to be made in Christ's Name.* 620, 621
Priesthood (*of Christ*) *the Excellency of it.* 414, 415
Profession (*of Christianity*) *Things contrary and agreeable to it.* 576——584
Purity (*from fleshly Lusts*) *why recommended to Christians.* 366, 367

Q.

QUadragesima-*Sunday, why so call'd.* 275
Quinquagesima-*Sunday, the reason of its Name.* 276

R.

RAce, *how the Christian Life is compar'd to it.* 276——278. *Prize to be obtain'd by that of Christianity.* 277, 278. *How we must run it to obtain the Prize.* 279——283
Redemption, *what is suppos'd and included in it.* 129. *How purchas'd by our Saviour.* ibid.
Relapse *into a sinful State, the great Danger of it.* 395, 396
Resurrection, *the Endeavours of the* Jews *and* Romans *to prevent that of our Saviour.* 476, 477. *How that of our Lord was confirm'd.* 477, 478, 487, 488. *The Importance of being assur'd of this.* 501. *The Witnesses of our Redeemer's Resurrection produc'd.* 508——513. *How*

How we ſhould conform our ſelves to our Lord's Reſurrection. 515, 516

Revenge, *the great Evil of it.* 210, 211, 213. *The means of ſuppreſſing it.* 214

Riſen with Chriſt, *in what ſenſe Believers are ſo.* 502

S.

Sacrifice, *the Imperfection of the legal ones.* 451, 452. *The Excellency of that of our Saviour.* 453, 454. *The Abſurdity of that of the Maſs.* 455. *The Improvement we ſhould make of Chriſt's.* 455——457. *How Chriſt is ſaid to be ſacrific'd for us.* 481, 482

Scriptures, *the Excellency and Divine Authority of them.* 19. *Their Uſefulneſs.* 20. *The End and Deſign of them.* 20, 21. *How we ſhould read, hear, and improve them.* 23——25

Seaſons (*of Grace*) *to be diligently attended.* 189

Second Coming (*of Chriſt*) *the Certainty of it.* 26. *Signs and Tokens which ſhall precede it.* 27. *The Manner and Circumſtances of it.* 29——31. *The End and Deſign of it.* 31, 32. *Leſſons we ſhould learn from the Doctrine of it.* 32, 33. *Miniſters Work to prepare People for it.* 41, 42

Self-Conceit, *the Evil and Danger of it.* 208, 209. *Means to cure it.* 210

Self-Denial *is the firſt Leſſon of Chriſtianity.* 111

Senſes, *what we learn from Chriſt's appealing to them.* 538, 539

Sexageſima *and* Septuageſima-*Sundays, why ſo call'd.* 275

Sheep, *how we have erred and ſtrayed like loſt Sheep.* 563. *How as ſuch we ſhould return to Chriſt as our Shepherd.* 564. *How Chriſt knows his Sheep.* 571. *How thoſe of Chriſt's Fold may be known by us.* 572. *How theſe know Chriſt's Voice and follow him.* 573

Shepherd, *how Chriſt performs the Office of a good one.* 568——570. *How our Lord as ſuch knows his Sheep.* 571. *Leſſons to be learned from Chriſt's being ſo.* 574, 575

Sin, *how Chriſt was ſaid to die to it.* 489

Sleep, *how Sin is compar'd to it.* 387. *Why the Death of Believers is ſo called.* 495, 496

Slow to ſpeak, *in what ſenſe it may be underſtood.* 598, 605

Son of God, *how peculiarly he reveal'd God's Mind to us.* 68——71. *The tranſcendent Glory of his Perſon.* 71, 72. *In what things he excels the Angels.* 73, 74

Spirit, *put for Chriſt's Divine Nature.* 469. *How our Saviour preach'd by it to the Spirits in Priſon.* 469, 470. *Vid.* Holy Spirit.

Star (*directing the Wiſe Men*) *various Conjectures concerning it.* 170. *Several uſeful Leſſons from the Scripture-Account of it.* 172, 173

Stephen (*the Protomartyr*) *the Epiſtle and Goſpel for his Day explain'd.* 85——99. *His Character.* 86. *His incouraging Viſion.* 87. *What occaſion'd the Rage of his Perſecutors.* 88. *His cruel*

cruel Treatment. 89. *His excellent Courage.* 90. *The happy End of his Sufferings.* 91, 92
Storms, *this World full of them.* 235
Strength, *we should take heed of presuming on our own.* 624
Subjection (*to our Rulers*) *recommended.* 224. *How 'tis to be express'd.* 225. *'Tis the Duty of all sorts.* 225, 226
Sufferings *for well-doing more eligible than for ill.* 466, 467. *How those of Christ were to bring us to God.* 468. *Are the Lot of good Men.* 558. *The different Nature and Kind of them.* 559. *Different Causes of them.* 559, 560. *The Patience which should be exercis'd under them.* 561. *The eminent Example of Christ in them.* 561, 562. *Instructions for rightly bearing them.* 564——566
Swine, *Remarks upon the Devil's Entrance into them.* 239

T.

TAres, *the Parable of them explain'd.* 249
Temptation, *that of Christ unfolded.* 353——360. *Several useful Instructions from this.* 360——362. *We should apply our selves to Christ for Succour in it.* 377
Things above, *what's meant by them.* 502. *How we are to seek them.* 503, 506, 507
Tribulation, *the best must expect it.* 625. *What Incouragement Christ gives his Disciples against it.* 625, 626
Tribute, *the Reasonableness of paying it to Governors.* 230, 231
Trouble, *often proceeds from Mistake.* 609

U.

VIndication *of our selves sometimes necessary.* 429
Vineyard, *Christ's Equity in rewarding the different Labourers in it.* 289——291
Unbelief, *the inexcusable Folly and Danger of it.* 223. *The dreadful Consequences of it.* 535, 536
Union, *how reasonable to be maintain'd among Christians.* 21, 22

W.

WAlking, *the Life of Christians often set forth by it.* 365. *The manner of it taught us by the Gospel.* 366, 370
Water and Blood, *how Christ is said to come by these.* 545——549
Wine *miraculously supply'd by our Lord.* 202, 203. *The Effects of this Miracle.* 203, 204
Wisemen (*Mat.* 2.) *who, and whence they came.* 167. *Useful Instructions from the Scriptural Account of them.* 172, 173
Witnesses *of our Lord's Resurrection produc'd.* 508——513. *Several useful Remarks concerning them.* 514, 515
Word, *why Christ is so called.* 77, 78. *Of Christ, how it should dwell in us.* 245. *How to be heard with Profit.* 305——309. *The Necessity of being Doers of it.* 397

World, *the things of it may be lawfully us'd.* 542. *In what sense 'tis overcome by the Regenerate.* 542, 543. *The Usefulness of Faith for overcoming it.* 543, 544. *How Christ has overcome it.* 627

Wrath, *how and why we must be slow to it.* 598, 599

Y.

YEar, *when the Ecclesiastical Year begins.* 1. *We should begin it with devoting our selves to God.* 175

FINIS.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM